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A Selection

FROM

PASCAL'S THOUGHTS

Translated by

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RIVINGTONS

WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON

Oxford, and Cambridge

MDCCLXXVIII

PREFACE

THIS short Selection from Pascal's "Pensées" has been made on no systematic principle, beyond that of taking such thoughts as seemed most likely to help those who read rather with a view to the quickening of their own devotional mind than for controversial ends, or for the intellectual enjoyment to be derived from some of the great Port Royalist's more philosophical pages. They are in no wise arranged, but have simply been collected from a variety of editions of his works, compared and collated with that which is now accepted in France as the best, a large quarto edition in two volumes, edited by Prosper Fodgères, who has not unfrequently been able to restore true readings, and to erase

additions and alterations which well-meaning editors had permitted themselves to make. A study of the various editions of the "Pensées," and comparison of the curious notes written upon them, from Voltaire on to M. Fougères, would be an interesting and curious occupation. But the conclusion could hardly fail to be *Magna est veritas, etc.* Perhaps this little book will lead some to dig for themselves in the mine of thought and philosophy whence it is drawn.

THE CONVERSION OF A SINNER

THE first inspiration which God vouchsafes to a soul which He visits indeed is an altogether extra-ordinary view and perception, by means of which that soul sees both itself and all else from a wholly fresh point of view.

This new light causes a strange fearfulness, and troubles the satisfaction which hitherto he had found in those things which were his delight. He can no longer contentedly enjoy what heretofore charmed him. A continual scruple disturbs enjoyment, and this new interior vision destroys the wonted sweetness of those things to which he before yielded unhesitatingly.

But at the same time he finds even more weariness in religious duties than in the world's vanities. On the one hand, the vanity of things visible touches him more closely than the hope of things invisible; on the other, the solidity of that which is invisible touches him more closely than the vanity of what is visible. And thus the presence of one and the solidity of the other contest his affection; while the vanity of one and the absence of the other excite his aversion, until he is filled with confusion and disturbance.

He looks upon perishable things as perishing, nay, as already perished; and assured that all he cares for most will be swept away, he trembles, as every moment carries off that which he treasures most, even while he is actually enjoying it; trembles all the more because he knows that a day will surely come when he will find himself stripped of everything on which he had fixed his hopes. He now realises fully, that having fixed his heart on fragile, empty things, his soul must needs be lonely and forsaken when called on to quit this life, since he has not given heed

to lay hold on any real possessions which could profit and sustain him here and hereafter.

Thus he begins to reflect how nothing worth all is which must fall into nothingness,—the sky, the earth, his own mind and body, relations, friends and foes, riches or poverty, misfortune and prosperity, contempt and esteem, power or insignificance, health or sickness—even life itself. In brief, whatever is less enduring than his soul, is powerless to satisfy one who earnestly seeks to attain a happiness as lasting as his own existence.

Then he begins to wonder at the blindness of his past life; and reflecting on the one hand upon the length of time he has gone on without perceiving these things, as so many others do yet; and upon the other how certain it is that the soul, being immortal, can find no true rest in perishable things, which must drop off when death comes, he is filled with devout amazement and a most healthful wonder.

In such a mind he goes on to reflect, that however many they be who grow old in the world's ways, and however influential their ex-

ample who trust to the world for happiness, it is evident, that even were the world's joys substantial (which a fatal and ceaseless experience denies), their loss when death comes, if not before, is inevitable. Let a man accumulate what earthly treasure he will, be it gold, science, or fame, stern necessity must strip him of all ; so that, if they ever were satisfying, they cannot be so lastingly, and that however real for the time, that happiness is but short-lived which is limited by this life's duration.

In this way, through a devout humility which God causes to triumph over pride, the man begins to look higher than the generality of men : he condemns their conduct, abhors their maxims, mourns their delusion ; he begins to seek the one true Good, which he realises must possess two qualities ; first, duration and possession at will, and secondly, that there be nothing better than it. He is conscious that in his blindness he attributed this latter quality to his love for the world ; but forasmuch as it is devoid of the first conditions, he recognises that it is not a sovereign good. So he seeks that elsewhere,

and having true light to see that it is not to be found ~~in himself, nor~~ without himself, nor around himself, he begins to seek it ~~about~~ himself.

This uplifting is so mighty and transcendent that it does not pause at Heaven; that cannot satisfy it; nor higher yet, with the angels, or spirits made perfect. The soul passes through all creation, and cannot stop until it reaches the Throne of God, where it finds its rest, and that only Good than which there is nothing better, and which cannot be taken from it against its will.

Even if the man does not yet experience the delights with which God rewards habitual piety, he at least perceives that the creature cannot be preferable to the Creator, and his reason, aided by the light of grace, proves to him that nothing is more to be loved than God, and that He cannot be taken from any save those who reject Him, inasmuch as to desire Him is to possess Him, and to refuse Him is to lose Him.

Thus the soul rejoices in having found a possession which cannot be snatched away so long as it is desired, and than which there is nothing better.

Then, amid such new-born thoughts, the man begins to perceive the greatness of his Creator, and to experience a deep humility and worship. Bowed down to the depths, and unable to form a low enough idea of himself, nor one great enough of his Supreme Good, he makes a fresh effort to plunge yet lower, by contemplating God in that immensity which seems ever multiplying around him. All exhausted by such an effort, his soul worships silently, owning himself God's vile, profitless servant, blessing and adoring Him for ever and ever. After a while he recognises the grace which has vouchsafed to manifest itself to one so beneath contempt, and making a fervent resolution of eternal gratitude, he becomes lost in wonder that he ever could have preferred such mere vanities to this dear Master; and, filled with compunction and penitence, flies to His pity to avert the wrath he feels deserved. He prays urgently that the same Mercy which has shown him himself may lead him on, and teach him how to attain God. For, aspiring after God, he also aspires only to attain Him by His own means, craving God as his way, his object,

his final end. Beginning to find out God, and longing to attain Him, he feels his ignorance of the means thereto; and if his craving be hearty and real, he imitates the traveller who, seeking a country, and having lost his way, turns to inquire it of those who are familiar with the road. He resolves henceforth ever to conform his will to God; but inasmuch as his natural weakness and the habit of sin already formed, make him helpless in attaining this blessed state, he asks of God's Mercy the means whereby to reach Him, and cleave to Him eternally.

Thus it is that the converted sinner learns to worship God as His creature, to thank Him as His debtor, to satisfy Him as guilty, to pray to Him as needy.

II.

De Roannez has said: "Reasons come as an afterthought: a thing pleases or displeases me at first without knowing the reason, and yet all the while it displeases me because of that

reason which I find out later." For my part, I do not believe the thing displeases because of these subsequently discovered reasons, but that we find out the reasons because we are displeased at the thing.

III.

When inclination leads us to do anything we forget duty ; e.g., we read a book we like when we ought to be about something else. 'To remember duty we have only to do something we dislike, and then we are quick enough to recollect that pressing duty, and turn from the claim.

IV.

The most unreasonable things become most reasonable owing to the imperfection of men. What sounds less reasonable than to choose the eldest son of a queen as the ruler of a country ? You would not choose the best-born passenger on a ship as fittest to steer her ; it would be ridiculous and unjust. But inasmuch as the

prince will always be what he is, the selection becomes both just and reasonable : for how are you to choose? The most virtuous or clever man? But here at once you meet with a collision, for every man aspires to be the best and cleverest! It is safer to associate the office with somewhat indisputable,—and this is the king's eldest son. That is a fact beyond discussion, and nothing can be more reasonable; for civil war is the greatest of all evils.

V.

Civil war is the greatest of evils; but it is a certainty if you are to govern by rewarding merit, because every one thinks himself most meritorious. The evil which may result from a fool who succeeds in right of his birth is neither as great nor as certain.

VI.

Splendour is not necessarily hollow, for it is a proof that many people work for you; and to

have many hands is not a mere superfluity or trapping. The more hands a man has the stronger he is, and thus splendour demonstrates his strength.

VII.

Labour for that which is uncertain is to be tossed on the ocean, or tread a tottering plank.

VIII.

Men are so necessarily foolish, that not to be a fool is merely a varied freak of folly.

IX. ~

The world judges rightly of many things, thanks to that natural ignorance which is man's real position. Science has two extremes which meet; one that simply natural ignorance in which everyone is born, and the other that ignorance at which great minds arrive when, having mastered whatever man can master, they find out that they know nothing, and come back to the point

of ignorance whence they started. But that is a very learned ignorance which realises itself. Those who have stepped beyond their natural ignorance without attaining the other kind, dabble in a pretentious knowledge, and make-believe to be wise: they do great mischief in the world through their mistaken judgments.

X. ✓

Man is neither an angel nor a beast, but unfortunately, when he affects to be an angel he achieves the other extreme.

XI.

Flies are powerful agents. They have won battles; they can hinder the mind's action, they consume the body.

XII.

In proportion to a man's own talent he will discover that other men are clever. Ordi-

¹ In allusion to Montaigne's mention of a siege which the Portuguese were forced to raise owing to a cloud of bees which surrounded them.

nary people cannot perceive the difference there is among those around.

XIII.

It is curious to observe how many people there are in the world, who, after setting aside all the laws of nature and of God, have made a law to themselves which they obey rigorously ; such, to wit, as the followers of Mahomet, robbers, heretics, and not unfrequently logicians. One would have supposed that, having overstepped all true and holy barriers, their license would know no check or limit.

XIV. ✓

Theology is a science, but how many other sciences does it not include ? A man is a living being, but dissect him, and is it his head, or heart, or stomach, or veins, or a single vein, or part of a vein, or his blood, which is the life ?

From a distance a town or a country place is that, and nothing more, but as you approach,

it divides into a series of houses, trees, tiles, leaves, blades of grass, ants, limbs of ants, to infinitude. Yet all this we include in the name of a country place.

XV.

Diversity is so endless, that every tone of voice, every step, cough, &c. is different from the rest. We distinguish grapes from all other fruits, and among grapes we distinguish Muscatel from Condrien, Frontignan, &c. But diversity does not end there: were there ever two bunches of grapes perfectly similar, or has any grape two seeds absolutely alike?

XVI.

How much magnifying glasses have discovered to us which was unknown to earlier philosophers! People used to talk about the errors of Holy Scripture concerning the multitude of the stars, and pronounce there are only 1022: we know it for a fact! •

There are plants on the earth ; we see them, but from the moon they could not be seen. And on these plants there are hairs, and in those minute insect life exists ; but there is nothing further. • Presumptuous man, pronouncing on what is composed of elements and what has none ! You may fear to say that that which you cannot see exists ; but if you use the world's language on such matters, at least do not think like the world.

XVII.

Time heals wounds and quarrels, because all changes, and we are no longer the same persons ; neither the offender nor the offended is his original self. Just so with a people who has been irritated ; when two generations have lapsed. They are still Frenchmen, but no longer the same.

XVIII.

It is not only that we look at things from different points of view, but also with different eyes ; so how should we see as before ? That

man no longer loves the woman he used to love ten years ago. Very likely. She is no longer the same, nor he either. He was young, and so was she; now she is quite another person. Perhaps he would still love what she once was.

XIX.

People suppose they are playing upon an ordinary instrument in man. An instrument, indeed, but one that is capricious, changeable, ever-varying, inharmonious!

XX.

All things have divers qualities, and the soul has divers inclinations; nothing is presented to the soul save in a complex aspect, and the soul never applies itself in single simplicity to any matter. Hence it comes that the same thing oftentimes causes us both to weep and to laugh.

XXI.

Inconstancy is caused by our consciousness of the unreality of present pleasure, and our

ignorance of the emptiness of that pleasure which is absent.

XXII. ✓

The strength of a man's virtue must not be measured by his extraordinary efforts, but by his ordinary life.

XXIII. ✓

I do not admire the excess of a virtue—valour, to wit—unless it is balanced by the excess of its opposite virtue, as, e.g., in Epaminondas, who united extreme valour with extreme benignity. Otherwise, it is rather a descent than an ascent. Greatness is not shown by attaining one extreme point, but by the attainment of the two extremes, while amply filling up the intermediate parts.

Do you reply that this may be merely a sudden flight of the soul to one or other extremity, and that it is a mere spark? Well, even then it indicates activity of the soul, if not a vast reach.

XXIV. ✓

They who go astray taunt those who are in the right path with wandering, believing themselves to be safe; just as men on board ship fancy that those on shore are departing from them. It is the same everywhere. We need a fixed point to judge from. The port is the fixed point for the ship; but what fixed point is to be taken in the moral world?

XXV.

When everything is in motion together nothing seems to move, as on board ship. When all are moving in the direction of disorder no one seems going. But he who pauses becomes a fixed point, whereby we observe the rapid movement of the rest.

XXVI.

When one is well one wonders how one could bear sickness; but when one is sick one

takes medicine cheerfully, disposed thereto by pain. One no longer feels the inclination^o for amusement or exercise which comes with health, and which is incompatible with the exigencies of sickness. Nature supplies wants and desires conformably to our actual condition. We are only troubled by those fears which we make for ourselves, but which are not made for us by nature; because thereby we combine the passions of a condition we are not in to those of the condition in which we are.

XXVII.

It is our misfortune not to be able to enjoy a thing save under the condition of being vexed if it turns out badly, as a thousand things may and do perpetually. He who could find the secret of enjoying what is good without being disturbed by the opposite mischance would have discovered the philosopher's stone!

XXVIII.

Our nature is movement; absolute stillness is death.

XXIX.

Man is full of wants : he only likes those who can supply them all. "Such an one is a great mathematician."—But I have nothing to do with mathematics, he would treat me as a proposition ! "He is a famous warrior."—He would take me for a besieged city ! What I want is an honest man who can adapt himself to all my general needs.

XXX.

A true friend is so desirable a thing, even for the great, so that they may have some one to speak well of them behind their backs, that they must needs do all they can to find such. But let them give good heed to their choice, for if after all they select a fool for their friend, it is useless, whatever good he may say. Or, more likely, he will not speak well of his patron, if he is among those stronger than he, for in his weakness the fool will slander to be like the rest.

XXXI.

Men spoil their taste and feeling just as they spoil their intellect. Intellect and feeling are formed by conversation; so good or bad conversation forms or spoils them. The great thing then is to know how to choose that which will form and not spoil the mind, and no one is competent to make this choice unless his mind is already formed and not spoilt. And here we find ourselves in a circle, whence he who breaks forth well is fortunate!

XXXII.

It is not absolutely safe to conclude that people are not lying because they have no self-interested motive in what they say; there are people who lie simply for lying's sake.

XXXIII.

If a man stands in a certain window to see the passers-by, and I go past, can I say that he

went there to see me? No, for he was not thinking of me in particular. But he who loves another for her beauty, does he love *her*? No, for the smallpox, which destroys her beauty, yet spares her life, will dissipate his love. Or, if I am loved for my judgment or my memory, is it I that am loved? No, for I may lose these qualities and yet remain myself. Where then is that *Me*, if it is neither in body nor soul? And how can one love body or soul save for those qualities which are not what constitute *Me*, inasmuch as they are perishable? Can we love the soul of any one in the abstract, apart from its qualities? Surely not; it were unreal. Then we never love *anybody*, but only certain qualities.

Be careful then how you laugh at those who expect to be thought much of for their position and title, since no one is loved save for borrowed properties.

XXXIV.

"*Me*" is always hateful. You *M*... conceal it, but you do not get rid of it nevertheless, and

so you are hateful all the same. "Not at all, for acting as we do courteously towards all, there is no reason to hate us." "That might be true if the only odious part of 'Me' were its unpleasantness; but if I hate it because it is unjust and eats into the heart of everything, I must hate it everywhere."

Briefly the case is this: there lie two properties in this "Me;" it is intrinsically unjust, in that it makes self the centre point of everything; and it is inconvenient to others, because it seeks to reduce them to subjection, for every "Me" is the enemy and would fain be the tyrant of everybody else. You may obviate the inconvenience, but not the injustice, and so you cannot make it attractive to those who abhor injustice; you can only adapt it to the unjust, who are not personally inconvenienced by it, and so, after all, you end by being unjust, and acceptable only to those who are unjust themselves.

XXXV.

It is an injustice to become attached to me, although willingly and with satisfaction. I should

deceive those whom I led to do so, for I can be an end to no one, and cannot satisfy them. Must I not die ere long? And then the object of their attachment dies. Just as I should be wrong in teaching what is false, even acceptably, both to those who listened and to myself, so I am wrong if I seek to be loved. And if I draw people to attach themselves to me, I ought to warn those who are committing themselves to the falsehood not to believe in it, however acceptable to myself; as also, that they should not attach themselves to me, because they ought to spend their lives and efforts in pleasing or seeking God.

XXXVI.

The knowledge of external things will not make up for ignorance of higher moral matters in the time of trouble; but the knowledge of those things will always make up for ignorance of external science.

XXXVII.

I had spent much time in studying the abstract sciences, and the meagre attainment one can

achieve had infinitely disgusted me. When I began to study man, I saw that the abstract sciences are not natural to him, and that I was straying further from my true position in striving to penetrate them than others who were ignorant thereof, and so I excused them for knowing little. But I thought that at least I should find many fellows in the study of man, and that there lay the one science which is his true calling. I was mistaken. Yet fewer study man than geometry. It is merely for want of knowing how to pursue that science that men pursue other sciences. But, after all, is it not true that even this is not the knowledge that man needs most, and that if he wants to be happy he had better remain in ignorance thereof?

XXXVIII.

We know so little of ourselves, that many a one fancies he is dying when he is quite well, and many others fancy they are quite well when death is nigh at hand—all unconscious as they are of the coming fever or wound. •

XXXIX.

The things about which we are most keen, such as the concealment of our own little worth, are often mere nothings, but nothings which imagination magnifies into mountains. Another effort of imagination will easily enable us to see this.

XL.

Imagination magnifies trifles until they fill our minds with altogether fantastic proportions : while with presumptuous insolence it diminishes great things to its own measure, as when men speak of God.

XLI.

Lustravit lampade terras. The weather and my humour have little connection. My temper does not depend much on the weather. I have my own fogs and sunshine within, which are not much affected even by the good or evil

¹ An expression of Cicero's.

attending on my own concerns. Sometimes I gird myself up to encounter Fortune's attacks, and the glory of conquering her makes me fight cheerfully; while, on the other hand, I sometimes become dejected amid the good things of fortune.

XLII.

When we see a certain effect always occur we conclude it to be a natural necessity, as, e.g., that daylight will appear to-morrow, &c., but Nature often gives us the lie, and departs from her own rules.

XLIII.

The mind believes naturally, and the will loves naturally; so that in default of rightful objects they must needs cleave to such as are false.

XLIV.

Grace will always be in the world as well as nature, so that it is in a measure natural. Thus

there will always be Pelagians, and always Catholics, and perpetual strife. For the first birth produces the one, and the grace of the second birth produces the other.

XLV.

Nature perpetually repeats the same things, years, days, hours, with similar intervals, and the numbers follow on, one after another, making a kind of infinitude or eternity. Yet there is nothing infinite or eternal in all this, only these finite creatures are infinitely multiplied: and thus it seems as though there were nought infinite save the number which multiplies them.

XLVI.

Nature imitates herself. A seed dropped into good ground is fruitful, so is a principle dropped into a right mind. Numbers imitate space, although so different by nature.

All is made and upheld by One Master: root, branch, fruit, principles, results.

XLVII.

Nature works by progress : *itus et reditus*. She advances and returns, then goes farther, then half as far, then farther than ever, and so on. This is how the tides work. The sun seems to go zigzag.

XLVIII.

Man's nature is not to be always advancing ; it has comings and goings of its own. Fever has its cold and hot fits, and the cold fit is as plain evidence of fever as the hot fit.

Man's inventions from age to age are much the same ; and, generally speaking, so is the good and wicked of the world.

Plerumque gratæ principibus vices.

XLIX.

When men are accustomed to use bad reasons in proof of Nature's results, they will not accept the good reasons which we discover. For instance, the circulation of the blood as the cause of a vein swelling beneath a ligature.

L.

If an animal could do that from intellect which he does from instinct ; if he could communicate intellectually what he communicates instinctively when hunting or intimating to his comrades that he has found, or lost the prey, he would certainly express himself clearly as to other things which concern him even more closely—*e.g.*, “Gnaw asunder this rope, which hurts me, and which I cannot reach.”

LI.

Animals do not admire one another : a horse does not admire his fellow. Not but that there is plenty of emulation between them in the field, but it is without ulterior results ; once in the stable, the worst-built, most sluggish beast does not cede his corn to another, as men claim that other men should do. They are content with things as they are.

LII.

Admiration ruins all from childhood. “O

that was so well said ! How well he acted ! How good he is ! " &c. Yet the children at Port Royal, from whom this stimulus of competition and praise is withheld, drop into indifference.

LIII.

Did you never come across people who boast of the great people who think highly of them, as a reproach to you for not valuing them more ? My answer would be—" Let me likewise see the merits with which you have charmed those people, and doubtless I shall esteem you as highly as they."

LIV.

Do you want great things to be thought of you ? Never tell them, then. To be well thought of ? Never speak of yourself, then.

LV.

Pity for those in trouble is no obstacle to selfishness ; on the contrary, one is not sorry to

have such an opportunity of displaying friendship, and getting the credit of a sympathetic nature without any cost.

LVI.

Those good deeds which are hidden are worth most. When I read of such in history, they please me greatly, but, after all, they were not altogether hidden, since they came to be known; and although the doers may have done what they could to hide them, the little left undone by which they came to light spoils it all, for the finest thing in the whole matter was the wish to hide them.

LVII.

There is no lack of good maxims current in the world; the only thing wanting is their application. For instance, every one says that a man is bound to risk his life for the public weal, and some few do so; but nobody does the like for religion.

LVIII.

Nothing attracts us more than a struggle, but it is not the same with victory. We like to watch a combat between two animals, but we revolt from the savage triumph of the conqueror over his victim. Yet what would we have, save the victorious end? But directly it is achieved, we loathe it. It is the same with play, or in the search after truth. Men like to watch the struggle of opinion in controversy; but, as for studying the truth when found, that is quite another thing! The only pleasure in that is to see it developed amid the strife. So again, amid the passions, it is interesting to see the contest between two opposite feelings; but as soon as one wins the day, it becomes mere brutality.

We never seek things themselves, but the search after them is what we enjoy. In comedy, scenes of happiness without fear, or misery without hope, are tame and uninteresting.

LIX.

What a mockery it is, that painting should be

admired for an accurate representation of subjects which we do not admire in the original !

LX.

Two similar faces, neither of which causes a smile when apart, make one laugh when together, because of their likeness !

LXI.

Rivers are moving roads, which carry one along one's way.

LXII.

Witty sayings,—unkind judgments. He who makes many *bon-mots* has a bad disposition.

LXIII.

Experience teaches one that there is a wide difference between devotion and goodness.

LXIV

Humble words are a subject-matter of pride to the proud, and of humility to the humble.

Few men speak humbly of humility, or purely of purity. We are altogether untruth, duplicity, and contradiction, and we even try to hide and disguise ourselves from ourselves.

LXV.

He who would sound the depths of human vanity need only ponder the causes and results of love. The cause is a *je ne sais quoi* (Corneille), and the results are overwhelming. That *je ne sais quoi*, so frail a thing that it cannot even be identified, moves everything, monarchs, armies, the whole world in short. If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter the whole face of the world would have been altered.

LXVI.

That so evident a thing as the vanity of the world should be so little recognised, or that it should be held strange and startling to say that the search after greatness is folly, is truly wondrous!

LXVII. ✓

Vanity is so rooted in the heart of man, that every soldier and cook and dustman makes his own boast, and craves his special admirers ; and philosophers just as much as they. Even those who write against vanity expect to be admired for writing so well, and those who read for their reading. Probably, I who write these words have just the same craving, and my readers too!

LXVIII.

Curiosity is mere vanity. Most people only want to know in order to talk.

LXIX.

• We are so presumptuous that we would fain be known to the whole world, and even to the generations which will come after us. And we are so vain that we are gratified and pleased with the approbation of five or six people immediately at hand.

LXX.

Vanity holds a mighty though natural grasp over us amid all our sorrows and failings. Men are even ready to lose their lives cheerfully provided they are talked about.

LXXI. ~

The charm of glory is so intense, that whatever it be connected with, even death itself, is attractive.

LXXII.

We do not uphold ourselves in any virtue by our own strength ; we are upheld by the balance of two opposing vices, just as we stand upright between two opposing blasts. Take away either vice, and men collapse into the other.

LXXIII.

Some vices only take hold of us by means of others, and if you take away the trunk they perish as so many branches.

LXXIV.

Evil is never so heartily and gladly wrought as when it is for conscience' sake.

LXXV.

People say that eclipses are foretellers of misfortune, because misfortunes are so common, and so frequently occur, that they are pretty often right; whereas, if they prophesied good fortune, they would often lie. They only foretell good fortune from rare auspices, and so they are generally right.

LXXVI.

I believe that if everybody knew what one says of the other there would not be four friends in the world! Look at the quarrels caused by indiscreet revelations of what one and another has said!

LXXVII.

The example of Alexander's chastity has not made so many pure men as that of his excess

has made drunkards. Men are not ashamed of being less virtuous than Alexander, and think it excusable if they are not more vicious. They fancy themselves not altogether in the track of common vice when they reflect the vices of great men, forgetting all the while that in this special point they are following the common track. They only approach the great man by the end where he touches the common herd, for, however great, such men always join the common herd by *some* link. They are not suspended as abstractions in mid-air. Not at all! If they are higher than us, it is because their heads are loftier, but their feet are as low as ours. All begin from the same level and stand on the same earth, and at that point they are just where we are, where the humblest, where little children, where the very beasts are!

LXXVIII.

Reason lays far more imperious orders on us than any master; since disobedience to the one is misery, and to the other folly.

LXXIX.

When you want to give a useful reproof, and to prove to another that he is wrong, you must take note of the point of view from which he looks at the matter in question, since very often he will be right from that side; then grant the truth as far as it goes, but show him the side on which he is wrong. This will satisfy him, because he will see that he was not mistaken, but only failed to see all sides. A man is not vexed because he cannot see everything, but he does not like to be mistaken; perhaps because it is natural for man to be incapable of seeing all round him, and also natural that he should not be mistaken on the side which he does see, for the perceptions of the senses are true.

LXXX.

Would you slay the wicked in order that there may be no evil men? You only make two instead of one. *Vince in bono malum.*

LXXXI.

Strength is the world's ruler, not opinion, but it is opinion which makes use of strength. Strength moulds opinion. Softness is a fine thing in our opinion. Why? Because he who is minded to walk the tight-rope will be solitary, and I can easily raise a strong party who will say that it is not worth doing.

LXXXII.

Be afraid of death when danger is distant, but not when it is at hand: we must needs be mortal.

LXXXIII.✓

No death is to be feared save that which is unprepared.

LXXXIV.

What is the difference as to obedience between the soldier and the Carthusian? They are alike dependent, and subject to an equally strict discipline. But the soldier always hopes

to become supreme, which he never does, for even generals and princes are always dependent and in bondage, yet still he hopes and works on with that object, whereas the Carthusian vows perpetual subjection. So that the difference lies not in their subjection, which is perpetual for both, but in that one always hopes to shake it off, which the other never does.

• LXXXV.

The reasons which from afar seemed to limit our sight, are no longer a limit when we look them in the face ; we begin then to see beyond.

LXXXVI.

Very trifles comfort, because very trifles grieve us.

LXXXVII.

Contradiction is a bad test of truth. Many certain facts are contradicted ; many falsehoods pass uncontradicted. It is no proof of false-

hood to be contradicted ; no proof of truth to escape contradiction.

LXXXVIII.

We are not tired of eating or sleeping daily, because hunger and sleepiness are daily renewed, but if they were not, we should weary of so doing. Even so, if we do not hunger after spiritual things, we weary of them. "Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst after righteousness."

LXXXIX.

Chance arouses thoughts, chance sweeps them away ; there is no act either of acquirement or retention.

A thought has escaped me ; I wanted to write it down. Instead of that I write down that it has escaped me !

XC.

Sometimes while writing my thoughts they escape me. But that reminds me of my weak-

ness, which I am continually forgetting; and this teaches me as much as the forgotten thought, for nothing is more important than the knowledge of my own imperfection.

XCI.

Why are we irritated by an intellectual limp, and not by one that is physical? Because the lame man grants that *we* do not halt; but the lame intellect persists in affirming that it is his neighbour who limps, otherwise we should be sorry for, not angry with him.

Epictetus asks why we should not be angry when told that we have a headache, and yet be angry when told that we argue falsely or choose amiss? It is because we know certainly that our head does not ache, or that we are not lame; but we are not so sure that our arguments are true. And thus our only assurance being in the clearness of our sight, when another sees the opposite side as clearly, we are perplexed and astonished; still more so when a thousand others ridicule our stand-point, which constrains

us to prefer our own lights to those of so many ; a thing at once bold and difficult. There is never this sort of contradiction of the senses concerning a physical halt. Man is so formed, that by dint of being told that he is a fool he believes it, and by dint of telling himself so he makes himself believe it. For every man individually holds an interior conversation with himself, which it is most important to regulate duly : *Corrumpunt mores bonos colloquia prava.*

The best thing is to maintain as real a silence as may be, and only dwell upon God, Who we know to be the Truth, and thus we convince ourselves thereof.

XCII. ✓

None so credulous as the unbeliever. He will believe Vespasian's miracles, while he rejects those of Moses.

XCIII.

The atheist ought to state unquestionable facts ; and it is by no means a plain fact that the soul is material.

XCIV.

Atheism is supposed to infer strength of mind, but it is of a very limited nature.²

XCV.

To make a saint of a man there must needs be grace, and he who doubts it knows nothing either of man or saint.

XCVI.

You cannot teach men how to be worthy, though you teach them everything else; and they never pique themselves on anything so much as on being worthy men. They only pique themselves on knowing the one thing which they do not learn.

² This was written in reference to an expression of Charron's, that "Atheism could only exist in a very bold and strong intellect." It requires as much or more tenacity and power to cast aside the apprehension of and belief in God as steadfastly to abide in Him. They are the two extremes, alike rare and difficult, but the first is the hardest.

XCVII.

There are but two classes of men, the righteous, who think themselves to be sinners, and the sinners, who think themselves righteous.

XCVIII.

The hypocrite is the man who knows the truth, but only maintains it so far as it suits his own interest, forsaking it when that limit is reached.

XCIX.

It is a good thing not to be too independent.
It is not a good thing to have all that is needful.

C.

The body is nourished gradually. Fullness of meat, and little substance.

CI.

Memory is necessary to all intellectual operations.

CII

Instinct and reason are the characteristics of two natures. The arithmetical machine produces results which are more like thought than anything performed by animals ; but it can do nothing to which one can attribute any power of volition such as they have.

CIII.

There is a universal and essential difference between acts of volition and all others. The will is one of the principal organs of belief, not that it forms belief, but because things are true or false according to the aspect from whence they are looked at. The will in accepting one aspect rather than another turns the mind aside from appreciating the qualities of those aspects which are 'unwelcome to it, and thus the mind, moving in time with the will, stops short at the acceptable aspect, and judges only by what it sees.

CIV.

All our reasoning is forced to yield to feeling. But fancy is at once like and contrary to feeling, so that we cannot distinguish between the two opposites. One says that my feeling is fancy, another that his fancy is feeling. We want a rule; reason offers itself, but it is elastic on every side, and so we have none.

CV.

When I reflect upon the brief tenure of my life as absorbed in a forerunning and future eternity, the little space I fill, or even behold, —lost in the infinite immensity of space, which I know not, and which knows not me,—I am appalled, and marvel to find myself here rather than there; for there is no reason why it should be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who placed me here? By whose rule and order was this special time and place assigned to me?

Memoria hospitii unius diei prætereuntis.

How many kingdoms reckon not of us!

The eternal silence of those infinite regions
appals me.

CVI.

Why is my knowledge so limited? or my height? Why is my life limited to a hundred rather than a thousand years? Why should nature have allotted this special number rather than any other in all infinity to me, when there was no reason for one more than another?

CVII.

I cannot help grudging those who, knowing the faith, live so carelessly, and make such bad use of a gift which I fancy I should turn to so different an account.

CVIII.

If to live without endeavouring to find out what one is, is a supernatural blindness, it is a still more terrible blindness to believe in God and yet to lead an evil life.

Selections from

CIX.

Two things teach man all that concerns his nature : instinct and experience.

CX.

Self-knowledge is necessary, even if it did not suffice to find out truth ; at all events it serves to regulate one's life honestly.

CXI.

A person once told me that he always came from confession filled with joy and trust, while another said that he was always full of fears. It seemed to me that the two put together would make the right thing, and that either was wanting because he did not feel as the other did. The same thing happens in many other matters.

CXII.

Every man is all in all to himself, for when he dies all is dead for him. And hence it

comes that every one believes himself all in all to everybody. We must not judge of Nature from our own point of view, but from hers.

CXIII.

The examples of a self-devoted death among Lacedemonians and the like do not touch us deeply, for what have they to do with us? But the example of martyrs' deaths touches us very closely, inasmuch as they are members of our body. We stand on common ground; their resolution forms ours, not merely by example, but by inheritance. But it is quite another thing with the examples of heathen,—we have no connection with them; just as we are none the richer for the wealth of a stranger, but we are if it is our father or husband who is rich.

CXIV.

Self will never can be satisfied, even when it obtains all it seeks; but we are satisfied the moment we renounce self. There is no such

thing as discontent where self is not ; neither can there be content where self is found.

CXV.

The lives of ordinary men and of saints have this in common,—all alike aim at happiness ; the only difference lies in the object wherein they expect to find it. Both alike call those who hinder them in attaining thereto their enemies.

We must decide as to what is good or evil according to God's Will, which cannot be either unjust or blind ; not according to our own will, which is always abounding in perversity and error.

CXVI.

The only true virtue lies in self-aborrence, for we are detestable by reason of our sensuality ; and in seeking an object really worthy of love. But inasmuch as we cannot love that which is wholly extraneous, we must love some being which is in us, and yet is not ourself. And there is but One All Supreme Being Who can be

this. The Kingdom of God is in us—the Universal Good is in me myself, yet it is not me.

CXVII.

The ordinary world has the gift of not thinking about what it wishes to forget. "Do not think about the prophecies concerning the Messiah" was the Jew's counsel to his son. And this is what many among us do ; and it is thus that many people keep hold of false religions, and sometimes even of that which is true. But there are some minds which have no power thus to prevent themselves from reflecting, and who indeed reflect all the more when reflection is forbidden ; and such as these easily shake off false beliefs, and too often true religion also, unless they are met with solid instruction.

CXVIII.

Who has not felt, when trying to think of God, something which seeks to turn him aside, to fix his thoughts elsewhere ? This is an evil inherent in us.

CXIX.

Men are very prone to confound their imagination with their heart ; and so they fancy themselves converted as soon as they begin to think about conversion.

CXX.

There is a vast distance between knowing God and loving Him !

CXXI.

Fascinatio nugacitatis. If you would resist your natural evil tendencies, act as though you had but a week of life before you. If you would give that week to God, you surely ought to give your whole life.

CXXII.

Men are hindered at once by superstition, sensuality, scruples, evil desires, and unholy fear, that is, a fear, not that which comes from belief

in God, but from doubts concerning Him. Holy fear comes of faith : unholy fear comes of doubt. Holy fear is joined to hope because it is born of faith, and that which we believe, we hope of God : unholy fear is joined to despair, because men fear the God in Whom they have no faith. One class of minds fears to lose Him ; the other fears to find Him.

CXXIII.

The Christian's hope of a future infinite gain is mingled with rejoicing as well as with fear ; for they are not as those who should hope for a kingdom of which they were not subjects ; they hope for holiness and the cessation of injustice, and already they possess somewhat thereof.

CXXIV.

The law has not rooted out nature, but rather grafted it in (*pas détruit, mais instruite*) : Grace has not rooted out the law, but guided it. That faith which is received in Baptism is the source of life to the Christian.

CXXV.

Men make an idol even of truth itself: for truth without love is not God, it is His image, and an idol not to be loved or worshipped; still less may we love or worship its opposite, which is falsehood.

CXXVI.

The waters of Babylon are ever flowing and falling, and carrying us away. O blessed Sion, where all is steadfast, and nothing falls! We must sit upon the rivers, not in or beneath, but above them; not standing, but sitting; sitting out of humility, and above for security. But we shall stand in the courts of Jerusalem. Consider whether the pleasure you aim at is steadfast or flowing past: if it passes by, it is a water of Babylon.

CXXVII.

Whatever is of the world is lust of the flesh, or lust of the eye, or pride of life. Woe to the

cursed land which is more truly blasted than watered by these three burning rivers. Blessed they who, being cast upon them, are neither plunged therein nor swept along by them, but are immoveably fixed; not standing, but in a lowly safe seat, which they quit not until the light shineth; but having waited peacefully, reach out their hand to Him Who shall lift them up, and place them upright and firm in the courts of the Heavenly Jerusalem, where pride can no more wrestle against or overcome them. These indeed weep, not because they see all perishable treasures swept away by the rushing torrents, but from loving remembrance of their beloved country, the Heavenly Jerusalem, to which their thoughts continually turn during their lengthened exile.

CXXVIII.

There is nothing so dangerous as that which pleases both God and man; for those conditions which are acceptable to both please God for one reason and man for something quite differ-

ent ; e.g. S. Teresa's noble life. That which pleases God is her intense humility amid her revelations ; but man admires her illumination. And so men exhaust themselves with attempts to imitate her words, fancying they are imitating her inner life, and that thereby they are seeking and attaining what God loves.

It is better not to fast and be humbled by the omission, than to fast and be self-satisfied. Remember the Pharisee and the Publican.

What is the good of remembering, if it may all equally help or hinder me, and if everything depends on God's blessing, which He only bestows on that which is done for Him, according to His rules and in His own way ; so that the way in which we do a thing is as important as the thing itself, or even more so, since God can bring good out of evil, while without Him we only get evil out of good ?

Measure not thyself by other men, but by Me. If thou findest Me not in those with whom thou comparest thyself, thou dost but compare thyself to an abominable wretch. If thou findest Me, then compare thyself. But what wilt thou

compare Myself, or Me in thee? If it be thyself, it is but an abominable wretch. If it be Me, thou comparest Me with Myself. Thus I am God in all.

I often speak to and counsel thee because thy guide cannot, for I will not that thou shouldst be without a guide. It may be, too, that sometimes I so speak in answer to his prayers, and thus he really guides thee when thou dost not perceive it.

Thou wouldst not seek Me if thou didst already possess Me. Therefore do not be uneasy when I seem still far off.

CXXIX.

Everything may be fatal to us, even the things made for our protection, just as walls may fall upon us, or steps trip us up if we do not go carefully.

The smallest movement affects all nature ; a single stone affects the whole ocean. - Just so in grace, the smallest act is important because of its consequences in everything. Thus everything is of importance.

In every act we should look beyond the thing itself to our present, past, and future state, as also that of such others as it concerns likewise, and see how all these hang together. Such considerations will hold us well in check.

CXXX.

The happiness of the great is to be able to make others happy.

The special purpose of riches is to be generously dispersed.

We ought to seek for the special end of everything. The special end of power is to protect the weak.

CXXXI.

Art thou less a slave because thy master loves and caresses thee?

Thou art well off indeed, thou slave; thy master caresses thee to-day, he will beat thee shortly.

CXXXII.

Nature diversifies and imitates; artifice imitates and diversifies.

CXXXIII. ✓

Since it is not possible to be universal and know everything that is to be known about all things, we must needs know a little of all. It is a much finer thing to know something about everything than to know all about one thing; such universality is much finer. If one could have both, so much the better, but if we must choose, that is the best; so says and does the world, and the world is often a good judge.

CXXXIV.

Nothing more clearly demonstrates human vanity, than the reflection on the cause and effects of love, which changes the whole universe; e.g. Cleopatra's nose.

CXXXV.

My fancy makes me detest any one who blows while eating. Fancy has great weight. What do you learn from that? To yield to that weight because it is natural? No, to resist it.

CXXXVI.

I love poverty, because Jesus Christ loved it. I love wealth, because it supplies means to help the suffering. I am faithful to all the world. I do not return evil for evil, but I wish those who do me harm to be even as I am, untouched by good or ill from the hand of man. I endeavor to be just, true, sincere, and faithful to all, and I have a tender heart for those to whom God has bound me closely. Whether alone or in the sight of men, I remember in all my actions that God Who sees them will be their Judge, and that they are all consecrated to him. These are my sentiments, and daily I bless my Redeemer for kindling them in me, and Who has delivered me, a miserably weak, sensual, proud,

ambitious man, from all my troubles by the power of His Grace, to which all glory is due, seeing that of myself I know nought save misery and error.

CXXXVII.

In eloquence you want what is agreeable and real, but the agreeableness itself must have a basis of truth.

CXXXVIII.

Continual eloquence becomes wearisome.

Even princes and kings play sometimes. They are not for ever on the throne ; they grow weary there : grandeur must be laid aside to be appreciated.

Continuity disgusts one in everything. Even cold is acceptable for the pleasure of warming oneself.

CXXXIX.

Eloquence is a picture of thought ; thus those who having pictured it continue to paint produce a composition instead of a portrait.

CXL.

Eloquence is the art of so saying things that (1) those to whom you speak may hear, not merely without disagreeable sensations, but with pleasure : (2) that they may be interested, so that self-love may lead them to give willing heed. So then eloquence consists in a correspondence one strives to establish between the heart and mind of those to whom one speaks, and the thoughts and expressions which one employs. And this implies having diligently studied the human heart in order to understand its manifold springs, and thereupon to adapt in nice proportions the words with which you purpose to influence it. One must put oneself into the place of one's listeners, and test the turn given to one's discourse by one's own heart, to judge whether one is adapted to the other, and whether one may count on the auditor being, so to say, constrained to yield.

As far as possible you should confine yourself within the limits of natural simplicity, not dealing with what is great pettily, nor exaggerating

- what is small out of due proportion. It is not
- enough that your discourse be fine, it must be suitable to its subject, neither too much nor too little.

CXLI.

In any dialogue or discourse one ought to be able readily to ask those who disapprove, "Of what do you complain?"

CXLII.

Some men speak well who cannot write well. That is because they are kindled by the place or audience, and so give forth what does not appear without such surroundings.

CXLIII.

Men who indulge in forced antithesis in speaking, are like the architect who makes sham windows for the sake of symmetry. They aim not to speak correctly, but to produce correct figures of speech.

CXLIV.

It will not do to make diversions (in oratory) save as a relaxation to the mind, and that only at suitable seasons; relaxing it when necessary, and not otherwise, for unseasonable relaxation is wearisome. • He who causes unseasonable weariness will produce relaxation, for the malice of human nature starts off and takes delight in doing the very contrary of what it is urged to do when that pleasure is withheld, which is the coin for which we are ready to give everything.

CXLV.

When we meet with a natural style we are surprised and delighted, for we expected an author and find a man. Whereas people of good taste, who, reasoning from a book, expect to find a man, are surprised to find an author. *Plus poetice quam humane locutus es.* •

They do most credit to Nature who to be capable of speaking well of things, even of theology.

CXLVI.

Some speakers continually mask or disguise nature ; they know no such thing as a king, pope, or bishop, it must needs be an " august monarch," &c. No such place as plain Paris ; but " the capital of the kingdom." There are occasions when Paris should be called Paris, and others when it may fitly be called the capital of the kingdom.

CXLVII.

When one finds repetitions in a discourse, which seem so well adapted to express what is meant that by attempting to correct them one would spoil the whole thing, it is well to leave them alone. This is the test, and it is mere blind envy which criticises without knowing that in such a case repetition is no fault, for there is no general rule.

CXLVIII.

One and the same meaning is changed

according to the words in which it is expressed. Meanings receive weight from the words which convey them, not the reverse.

CXLIX.

The last thing one finds out in composing a work is what ought to come first.

CL.

Those who are accustomed to be guided by feeling cannot enter into the principles of reasoning, for they expect to see the point of a matter at once, and are not used to seek for principles. On the other hand, those who are accustomed to reason from principles cannot enter into matters of feeling, but keep wanting to reduce them to principle, unable to see the point as a whole.

CLI.

If we know any one's ruling passion, we may be sure of pleasing him; nevertheless, every one has his own special fancies, which are contrary

to his real good, mixing even with his notion of what is good, and this is an inconsistency which often baffles one.

CLII.

When a simple discourse depicts a passion or its result, we feel the truth of what is said within ourselves, though we knew it not before, and thus we are disposed to like him who has led us to the discovery. For he has not displayed his own good things, but ours, to us, and this benefit predisposes us towards him; besides which a mutual understanding naturally opens our heart towards him.

CLIII.

It is not in Montaigne, but in myself, that I esteem all I see in him.

CLIV.

Montaigne's defects are great: *e.g.*, loose expressions, &c., his opinions concerning voluntary homicide and death, and indifference

concerning salvation. His book not being written in order to inculcate piety, it was not incumbent on him to do that, but it is incumbent on every one not to oppose it. We may condone some of his rather free and sensual opinions in some passages of life, but we cannot condone his altogether heathenish opinions concerning death; for a man must renounce all religion if he does not at least desire to die like a Christian. But all through his book Montaigne only seeks an easy, cowardly kind of death. Montaigne's merits are not easily acquired. His defects (I mean apart from morality) might have been corrected in a moment, if he had been warned that he romanced overmuch and talked too much of himself.

CLV.

When the truth of a matter is not known just as well that there should be a popular error extant which satisfies men; e.g., when they attribute the change of weather or the course of diseases to the moon; and that because man's

greatest disease is a restless curiosity concerning things he cannot know, and there is less harm done by his mistakes than by this profitless curiosity.

CLVI.

Words variously disposed convey divers meanings ; and meanings variously conveyed produce divers effects.

CLVII.

Some authors who speak of *my* book, *my* commentary, *my* history, would be more accurate if they said *our* book, *our* commentary, &c., considering how much more thereof is other people's property than their own.

CLVIII.

There is a certain standard of attraction and beauty which consists in a definite sympathy (*rapproch*) between our nature—strong or weak, as the case may be—and the thing which pleases

us. Everything which is moulded by this standard satisfies us; whether it be a house, a song, or a sermon, poetry or prose, women, birds, rivers, trees, rooms, dress, &c.; and everything not framed to this standard is unsatisfactory to people of good taste. So again, as there is a perfect sympathy (*rappor*t) between a song and a house framed according to this good standard, because each after its own kind is like the only standard of perfection, so there is a perfect *rappor*t between things formed according to an imperfect standard. Not that the lower standard is unique, for there are an infinity of such. But, *e.g.*, every bad sonnet, on whatsoever false standard it is composed, is precisely similar to a woman dressed by the same standard. Nothing shows more clearly how absurd a bad sonnet is than to examine its nature and standard, and then to picture to oneself a woman or a house framed on the same standard.

CLIX.

As we talk of poetic beauty, so we might as well talk of geometrical or medicinal beauty.

But we don't; and the reason is, that we know quite well what the object of geometry is, and that it consists of proofs; and what the object of medicine, namely, healing; but we do not know wherein consists that charm which is the object of poetry. We do not know the natural model which ought to be followed, and, for lack of this knowledge, men have invented grotesque expressions—*golden age, marvel of our days, fatal, &c.*, and then they call this jargon poetical beauty.

But if any one were to imagine to himself a woman framed on such a model, which consists of expressing little things in big words, he would see a pretty damsel covered with bits of looking-glass and chains, which would make him laugh, because he knows better wherein the charm of a woman lies than the charm of verses. But those who know nothing about it would admire her strange adornment, and in many a hamlet she would be mistaken for the queen. And so we call sonnets framed on this model "*Les reines de village.*"

CLX.

I have never formed precisely the same judgment of a thing twice over. I cannot judge of my work while it is in hand; I must imitate painters, and go a little way off, but not too far. How far? Guess.

CLXI.

Those who criticise a work without any fixed rule of judgment, are, with respect to others, like a man with a watch as compared with him who has none. These last say, "It is two hours," or "It is only three-quarters of an hour." I look at my watch, and say to the one, "You are bored," and to the other, "Time flies with you, for it is an hour and a half." And I laugh at those who tell me that time hangs heavy with me, or that I speak at random; they do not know that I decide by my watch.

CLXII.

It is better not to have to say of any one that

he is a great mathematician, or preacher, or very eloquent, but that he is a good man. This universal quality is the only thing which pleases me. It is a bad sign when, on seeing a man, we immediately remember his book. I would rather not perceive any special qualification, save by seeing it called forth into use. • It is better not to think whether a man speaks well or not until the question of speaking arises; then by all means let us feel that he does so.

CLXIII.

Some people talk for a quarter of an hour after they have said all there is to say for the sheer love of talking. The parrot is for ever polishing his beak, however clean it may be.

CLXIV.

Symmetry is a thing we perceive at a glance. It is founded on there being no reason why the thing in question should be otherwise.

CLXV.

I dislike a buffoon and a man on stilts equally.
One could not make a friend of either.

Many words instead of any heart. One can't
make one's friend of a man without heart.

CLXVI.

Those conditions of life which the world holds
as easiest are the most difficult in God's Sight,
while, on the other hand, the world reckons
nothing so hard as a religious life, although
really nothing is pleasanter if it be led according
to God's Will. The world esteems nothing easier
than to hold high worldly position and great
riches, whereas nothing is harder than to live to
God amid such, and not to grow attached to
them.

CLXVII.

Some men seek to serve God and the
world, and only succeed in incurring the dis-
pleasure of both.

CLXVIII.

Just as the object of peace in a kingdom is to maintain property in security, so the peace of the Church has no other object than to preserve securely that truth which is its property, and the treasure where its heart is. And as it would be contrary to the desire of peace to suffer an enemy to enter the kingdom to pillage it unresisted, out of fear lest its quiet be disturbed (because peace is only good and useful so far as it promotes security, and becomes unjust and hurtful if it fails therein, whereas the war which defends that security becomes both just and necessary); so in the Church, when truth is assailed by the enemies of the faith, when they seek to root it out of men's hearts and substitute error, were it to serve or to betray the Church to remain at peace? were it to defend or to ruin her? Is it not obvious that just as it is a crime to disturb peace when truth reigns supreme, so it is a crime to abide in peace when the truth is being trodden down? It is written that "there is a time for

peace and a time for war;" and it is the love of truth which discerns between them. But there is not a time for truth and a time for error; on the contrary, it is written that "the Truth of God abideth for ever;" and therefore it is that our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said that He came to bring peace on earth, also said He came to bring war. But He never said that He came to bring falsehood as well as truth.

And thus truth is the first principle and last end of all things.

CLXIX.

Our Lord never condemned without hearing. To Judas it was "*Amice, ad quid venisti?*" So to him who had not on the wedding garment.

Nisi videritis signa, non credetis: He does not ~~believe~~ blame them for not believing when there were no miracles, but because they had not ~~themselves~~ been among the spectators.

CLXX.

It is impossible for God to be the End where

He is not the Beginning. Men may fix their gaze aloft, but if they are standing on a quicksand their treading will glide from under them, and they will sink while gazing at the sky.

CLXXI.

After many other signs of religion, they yet further are undergoing persecution, which is the truest of all signs of religion.

CLXXII.

It seems impossible that those who love God with all their heart should not recognise the Church, her claims are so evident. And equally impossible it is for the Church to convince those who love not God.

CLXXIII.

There is some satisfaction in being in a storm-tossed ship when one is confident that it cannot perish. The Church's persecutions arouse this feeling.

CLXXIV.

As to confession and absolution, with signs of sorrow for sin, God looks only at the interior, the Church only judges from the exterior. God absolves so soon as He perceives penitence in the heart; the Church absolves when she perceives repentance in act. God will raise up a Church all pure within, which by its inward and spiritual holiness shall confound all proud pharisaism, and the Church will raise up men whose external conduct is so pure that they shall confound all heathen morality. If there are hypocrites among them, so disguised that she does not recognise their poison, she bears with them; for albeit they are not accepted of God, Who cannot be deceived, they are received of men, whom they do deceive. And thus she is not dishonoured by their conduct which appears holy.

CLXXV.

What hinders our power of comparison of

Pascal's Thoughts.

what formerly took place in the Church with what we find now, is, that ordinarily people think of S. Athanasius, S. Teresa, and the like, as crowned with glory, and as well-nigh divine. Now that Time's light is cast on them it seems so. But at the time the world persecuted them that great Saint was only a man called Athanasius, and S. Teresa a weak woman. "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are" (James v. 17), the Apostle wrote, in order to disabuse Christians of that false notion which leads us to reject the example of saints as unsuitable to our condition. They were saints, we say, and not such as we are.

CLXXVI.

Man is as an heir finding his title-deeds. Is he likely to say, They may be false? or will he neglect to investigate them?

CLXXVII.

Between us and heaven or hell there is only that intermediate life, which is the frailest thing conceivable.

CLXXVIII.

Suppose a man in his cell, not knowing whether his sentence is given, having but one hour's space in which to learn it, and aware that that hour is enough to obtain its reversal, if once he knows it to be given, is it not contrary to all nature that he should spend that hour, not in ascertaining whether his sentence is given, but in playing at cards?

Equally unnatural is it that man [should trifle under doubts as to the future life]. It seems a visitation of God's Hand. Thus not only the zeal of those who seek Him is a proof of God's Existence, but likewise the blindness of those who seek Him not.

CLXXIX.

~~It seems~~ to me more profitable than the study of Copernicus to study this: That it concerns our whole life to know whether the soul be mortal or immortal.

We run carelessly over the precipice so soon as we have put something in front which hinders

our seeing it. What a mockery it is to rest in the society of our fellow-men. Weak as ourselves, powerless as ourselves, they cannot help us ; we must die alone.

Clearly, then, we must act as though we were alone, and should we then build gorgeous houses, and so forth? We should seek truth unhesitatingly, and those who reject it prove that they value the opinion of men more than the search after truth.

CLXXX.

Man's sensitiveness to trifles and his insensibility to great things is the token of a strange subversal.

Religion is so great a matter that it is just that they who will not take the trouble of seeking it amid difficulty should be deprived of it. What is there to complain of if it is what may be found by seeking?

CLXXXI.

I blame alike those who take the line of praising man or of blaming him, or who merely

amuse themselves with trifling. I can approve none save those who seek painfully. I pity unbelievers who are seeking the truth, for are they not already unhappy enough? but I condemn those who boast of their unbelief.

Rather one ought to pity both one and the other, but one's pity for the first comes of tenderness, and one's pity for the last of contempt.

CLXXXII.

One must needs be of the religion unbelievers despise in order to learn not to despise them.

CLXXXIII.

It is unquestionable that there is no good thing apart from the knowledge of God; that in proportion as that is attained men are happy, and that the height of happiness is to know Him surely; as that in proportion to the degree we depart from Him we are miserable, and that the greatest misfortune would be were it certainly otherwise.

CLXXXIV.

Plainly to doubt is a misfortune ; but inquiry where doubt exists is an indispensable duty. And thus he who doubts and does not inquire is both unfortunate and faulty. If, moreover, he be likewise cheerful and presumptuous, and know no terms wherewith to qualify so extravagant a being, nevertheless, sure it is that man is so perverse that he finds a certain secret root of pleasure therein.

CLXXXV.

Is doubt a thing to express with gladness ? Surely it is a matter to be most sorrowfully expressed.

Strange it is that any one can boast, and with lofty mien proclaim himself ready to rejoice, to live fearlessly and without care, taking his chance as to what may come, because all is uncertainty, and we shall see what will turn up ! Verily I do not perceive the argument !

CLXXXVI.

Is it courage when a dying man goes, in all the weakness of his last agony, to encounter an Omnipotent, Eternal God? Surely, were I in such a plight, I should count myself happy if any one took pity on my folly, and mercifully dragged me out of it even against my will !

CLXXXVII.

A strange subject for joy it seems to have no prospect save misery without remedy ; a strange comfort to despair of any comforter !

CLXXXVIII.

Even those men who are most opposed to the ~~glory of~~ religion are not wholly useless to other men.

To begin with, we may infer from them that there is a supernatural, for such blindness is no natural thing ; and if their folly makes them such enemies to their own good, it will also tend

to preserve others by the terror of so woeful an example, and of so pitiable folly.

Are these unbelievers so full of fortitude as to be inaccessible to whatsoever befalls them? Let us see how they bear the loss of means or honour.

CLXXXIX.

The fine gentleman piques himself on not showing consideration for others, and the religious man on showing it.

CXC.

One would think men would contemplate an hereafter, not from zealous devotion or detachment, but from a purely human point of view,—out of self-love and self-interest.

Self-love, because it surely is a sufficiently interesting matter for consideration, if we are to be convinced that after all the troubles of this life, inevitable death, which threatens us every hour, must certainly come in a few years,—and then

Selections from

It is useless to say that doubt is a proof of reasoning power. Even the man who was certain of the falsity of these facts could hardly be glad thereof—rather, one would think, depressed.

This is the one thing that matters, and the only thing which men neglect !

CXCI.

Our imagination is for ever exaggerating the present by continually dwelling upon it ; and, on the other hand, diminishing eternity in like manner, for want of dwelling upon that ; until we make a mere nothing of eternity, and an eternity of mere nothing. Moreover, this is so rooted a propensity in us, that all our sense cannot guard against it.

CXCII.

I would fain ask those unbelievers whether they do not themselves prove the groundwork of that faith they oppose, namely, that man's nature is corrupt ?

CXCIII.

Picture to yourself a number of men in chains, all condemned to death, some of whom are daily executed in the sight of the rest, those who look on beholding their own lot set forth in their fellows, while they gaze one at another in hopeless suffering, awaiting each his turn. Such is a fair picture of the unbelieving world.

CXCIV.

Let the unbeliever at least learn what the religion he opposes is before he begins to fight. If this religion pretended to a clear knowledge of God, to see Him fully and unveiled, it might be an argument against it to say that there is nothing in this world which thus evidently sets Him forth. But since, on the contrary, religion affirms that men are in darkness and afar from God, that He is hidden from their sight, and even calls Himself in Holy Scripture a Hidden God (*Deus absconditus*); and since, moreover, she labours to establish these two facts, viz.,

that God has ordained sensible tokens in the Church, whereby He makes Himself known to those who seek Him in sincerity, while at the same time He has so veiled them that they can only be perceived of those who seek Him with their whole heart; what vantage-ground has the unbeliever, who, in his boasted carelessness as to the pursuit of truth, says that nothing sets it before him? Surely this darkness in which he is, and which he imputes as a fault to the Church, merely proves one of the points she affirms, without affecting the rest, and so far from disabling her teaching does but confirm it.

In order to conduct his warfare successfully the unbeliever rather should be able to cry aloud that he has used every effort to seek the knowledge of God everywhere, even through the channels opened to him by the Church, in vain. Could he hold such language he would at any rate have an argument against one pretension of the faith. But I hope to prove that no reasonable being can speak thus; I even make bold to say that no one has ever done so. We know well how they proceed who are under

the influence of such a mind. They fancy they have made mighty efforts to learn if they have spent some brief time in reading some part of Holy Scripture, and have questioned some clergyman concerning the main articles of the faith ; and then they go forth boasting that they vainly sought for truth among books and among men ! But, verily, I must repeat what I have often said before, that such negligence is intolerable. This is no question of the passing interest of some stranger that it should be thus trifled with ; it concerns each man himself and his all.

The immortality of the soul is a thing which concerns us so greatly and deeply, that a man must be lost to all feeling who can be indifferent as to the knowledge thereof. Every action and thought in life must needs take so various a course, according as there is an eternal good to be hoped for or not, that it is impossible to take any step with good sense and judgment, save as regulated with respect to this point, which must be our final object.

So our first interest and our first object is to be enlightened on this subject, whereon our

whole conduct in life depends. And herein, among those who are not yet convinced, I place a wide interval between those who labour with all their energy to learn and those who live on without anxiety or thought for the matter.

I can feel nought but the tenderest compassion for those who mourn sincerely their doubt, who reckon it a heavy misfortune, and who, sparing no effort to come forth, make the search after truth their main and most earnest pursuit.

But as for those who pass their lives without making of their last end, and who, simply because they fail to find convincing light in themselves, neglect to seek it elsewhere, or to investigate thoroughly whether such belief is one resulting merely from the childish simplicity of ignorant men, or one which, however mysterious in itself, yet rests on a firm, immoveable foundation,—such as these I look at from a wholly different point of view.

Such negligence in a matter which involves themselves, their eternity, their all, angers more

than it touches me; it amazes and terrifies me; it seems as an unnatural monstrosity. Nor do I say this out of the fervour of devotion or spirituality. On the contrary, I think that the mere principle of human interest and of self-love must cause such a feeling. We need only consider what is obvious to the least enlightened of men.

It needs no highly wrought mind to perceive that here no true substantial satisfaction is to be found, that all our pleasures are but vanity, that our troubles are endless; and finally, that death, which hangs continually over us, must inevitably ere long bring us face to face with the awful alternative of eternal annihilation or eternal misery.

Nothing can be more real or more terrible. Affect what unconcern we will, this is the end which awaits the most fortunate of earthly lives. Ponder this, and say whether it is not an indubitable fact that there is no good thing to be enjoyed in this life without the hope of another life; that there is no rejoicing save in expectation thereof; and that, as there is no real misfortune

to those who are firmly built up in their hopes of eternity, so there is no real happiness for those who have no perception thereof.

Assuredly, then, it is a grievous evil to be in such doubt; but at all events it is an indispensable duty for one who so doubts to inquire, and therefore he who doubts and does not inquire is at once most unfortunate and most wrong. But if, furthermore, he is at ease and satisfied withal, if he parades his doubt and even glories in it, I know no words competent to characterise so extravagant a being.

Whence can such feelings rise? What matter of satisfaction can any one find in the prospect of nought save irremediable misery? What subject for vanity in a state of impenetrable darkness? And how can he be counted as a reasonable man who practically argues thus?—

“I know not how I came into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I am myself. I am in the most terrible ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, or my senses, or my soul, or what even that part of my being which thinks what I say, which reflects upon itself or

ought else, and which knows no more of itself than of any other thing. I behold the awful space of the universe which contains me, I find myself fixed in a corner of the mighty reach, without knowing why I am here rather than elsewhere, or wherefore the brief space of time destined for my life is assigned to me at this period rather than another of that eternity which has preceded and will follow upon my existence.

"Look where I will I see infinity on all sides, closing me in as a mere atom, or as a shadow which endures but a moment and comes not again.

"All that I know is that I must soon die, but the matter concerning which I know least of all is this very death which I can in nowise avoid.

"As I know not whence I come, so neither know I whither I am going; all I know is that on leaving this world I must fall for ever either into nothingness, or into the hand of an offended God; but I know not which of these two conditions is my everlasting lot. Such is my state,

full of misery, weakness, and obscurity. And the conclusion I draw from all this is, that I should pass all my life without attempting to discover what awaits me. Perhaps I might find some light, some clearing of my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, or go out of my way to seek it; but rather, despising those who labour for such an end, I will go on heedlessly and without fear to meet so great an event, and float down passively towards the gulf of death, in absolute uncertainty as to the eternity of my future state."

Who would desire a man who argued thus as his friend? Who would choose him as a counsellor? who would have recourse to his sympathy in affliction? And to what use can his life be available?

Truly it is creditable to religion that her enemies be so utterly unreasonable, and their opposition is so little a danger, for it rather tends to the confirmation of her main truths. For the Christian faith is bent chiefly on affirming the two points, the corruption of man's nature and the redemption of Jesus Christ. And if

such men do not serve as proofs of the truth of redemption by the holiness of their lives, at least they serve admirably to prove the corruption of human nature by such monstrous opinions.

Nothing is so important to man as his actual state, nothing so awful as eternity. And therefore, if we find men who are indifferent to the loss of existence and to the risk of everlasting misery, it is altogether an unnatural state. They are quite different as to everything else; they fear the slightest evil, they foresee and are acutely sensitive to it; and the very same man who will spend days and nights in passionate despair at the loss of office, or at some fancied affront, will accept what to him is a fact—that he is about to lose everything by death, without anxiety or emotion. It is a marvellous perversion to see one identical heart so sensitive to trifles and so strangely callous to the weightiest matters. It is an incomprehensible delusion, a supernatural drowsiness, which betokens the influence of a mighty power.

There must be some strange contradiction in human nature to make a man glory in a state

which seems inconceivable in any one. Yet experience shows it to be so common, that one would be lost in astonishment, but for the conviction that the greater part of those who affect such indifference are merely acting a part which is an unreality to them. They are people who imagine it fine to assume such independence; they call it throwing off the yoke, and strive to imitate those who have done so. But it would not be a hard matter to show these how mistaken they are in fancying to win any esteem by such a course. It is not the way to gain such, even among worldly people of sound judgment, who are well aware that the only means thereto is for a man to prove himself honest, faithful, judicious, and capable of serving his friend well; inasmuch as men naturally like those who are useful to them. But what advantage can we derive from hearing a man affirm that he has thrown off the yoke; that he does not believe there is a God Who watches his actions; that he holds himself to be the sole controller of all he does, and is accountable to no one save himself? Does he imagine that

such utterances will induce us to place great confidence in him, or to expect consolation, counsel, and succour from him in all the vicissitudes of life? Does he think he is gladdening our hearts by telling us that he believes our souls to be no more than a puff of smoke; and telling it too in a self-satisfied proud manner? Is it a thing to be cheerily announced? Is it not rather a thing to be sadly uttered, as of all subjects the most sorrowful?

If these men would reflect seriously they would see that their course is so unseasonable, so contrary to good sense, to good feeling, and so far apart from all that superiority of tone at which they aim, as to be more likely to correct than to infect those who might be disposed to follow their lead. Of a truth, ask them to explain the feelings and reasons which make them question religious truths, and they will bring forth such feeble, worthless arguments as may easily convince you of the contrary. Somewhat of the sort was aptly said by one who had listened to such talk: "If you go on with such reasonings, you will soon convert me!" And he

was right, for who would not shrink from finding himself the associate of such contemptible men?

Verily, those who affect such opinions will scarce find it worth while to repress their natural feelings in order to prove themselves utterly vain and impertinent. If they are heartily sorry to be so without light, let them not conceal it, there is nothing to be ashamed of. The only thing to be ashamed of is being devoid of shame. Nothing more clearly proves utter feebleness of mind than a want of perception of the misery of man without God; nothing is a stronger indication of a bad disposition than not to wish that the eternal promises should be true; nothing is more cowardly than to affect effrontery towards God. Let them leave all such impiety to those who are evil enough to really feel them: let them at least be honest men if they cannot be Christians; and let them understand that there are only two manner of men who can be called reasonable—those who serve God with their whole heart because they know Him, or those who seek Him with their whole heart because as yet they know Him not. But as for those

who go on neither knowing nor seeking Him, they prove themselves so unfit to take care even of themselves, that they are totally unfit for the care of others, and we need all the charity which religion inculcates not to despise them utterly, and leave them alone in their folly. Yet, inasmuch as religion constrains us to look upon them, so long as they are in this life, as capable of receiving enlightening grace, and to believe that they might even attain in a short space of time to loftier heights of faith than our own, while on the other hand we might fall away to their darkness,—so we must needs do for them what they would fain have done for us were we in their place, and urge them to take pity on themselves, and at least take some steps towards the search after light.

CXCV.

We load men from childhood with the charge of their honour, their property, their friends, and even their friends' honour. We overwhelm them with business, with an apprenticeship of sciences

and languages, and give them to understand that they cannot be happy unless their health, their honour, their fortune, and that of their friends, be prosperous, and that, any one of these wanting, they will become miserable. And so we smother them with offices and responsibilities which harass them from daybreak onwards. A strange way of making men happy, some will exclaim ; what more could you do to make them wretched ? What could we do, forsooth ? Nothing, save to deprive them of all these cares ; for then indeed they would see and ponder on what they are, whence they come, and whither they are going ; and so they cannot be so thoroughly absorbed and distracted. For the same reason, if, after we have given them so much engrossing business, they should still find any spare moments, we bid them spend these in amusement, and give themselves up entirely to it.

CXCVI.

Sometimes, when reflecting upon the various troubles of men, and the risks and troubles to

Which they expose themselves at court, in war, &c., whence so many passions, quarrels, and evil enterprises spring, I have said to myself that all man's misery comes from his not knowing how to remain quietly at home. If a man who has wherewithal to live knew how to stay at home contentedly, he would not venture forth upon the seas or camp. A man only purchases a costly commission because he cannot abide the dulness of his native place; he only seeks society and amusement because he finds no pleasure at home. But when, upon closer reflection, and after coming to the cause of all our troubles, I have sought the reason thereof, I find one very sufficient in the natural misery of our weak mortal state, which is so miserable, that after close inspection there seems no comfort to be found.

Imagine the most prosperous earthly condition possible, some monarch surrounded by all conceivable delights, if he be without distractions, and be suffered to think and reflect upon what he is, his frail happiness will not abide, he will inevitably sink into forebodings of

possible disasters and of certain sickness and death, so that, if he be deprived of what are called diversions, he will be miserable, more so than the humblest of his subjects who can play and amuse himself. }

Hence it comes that gambling, society, war, important posts, are so sought after. Not that they have any intrinsic power of conveying happiness, or that any one believes any real blessing to be found in the money he wins, or the hare he runs. He would not thank you for either if you gave them to him. It is not the mere voluptuous life (which indeed gives leisure for reflection on our woeful lot) which men seek, or the perils of war, or the toil of office, but the bustle which distracts thought and diverts it.

Hence it comes that men so dearly love noise and motion ; hence it comes that imprisonment is so horrible a torture ; hence it comes that [to many] the charm of solitude is an incomprehensible mystery. And men esteem it, as one of the highest privileges of royalty to be surrounded by those whose object is to procure

the constant diversion and to ensure their continual pleasures.

The king is surrounded by those who think only of his amusement, and hinder him from self-contemplation. For of a truth, king as he is, he is unhappy if he thinks of himself.

And this is the best of man's invention to make himself happy ! Yet those who affect to be philosophic, and call it unreasonable to spend the day in pursuit of a hare they would not say, know but little of human nature. The hare would be no protection from the thought of death and suffering, but the activity of sport averts it. And so when the would-be philosopher taunts the hunter with his eager pursuit after what does not satisfy him, he would reply (were he capable of reflection) that what he seeks is a vehement, impetuous action which prevents his thinking of himself, and so replying he would silence his opponent. But he does not so reply, because he knows not himself, he does not know that it is the sport and not the game he seeks.

Men fancy that if they could gain such or

such an office they would gladly rest, not realising the insatiable nature of their greed. They believe themselves to be sincerely seeking rest while they really are only seeking excitement. They are actuated by a secret instinct which stimulates them to seek occupation and diversion without, and which comes from the consciousness of their constant infirmities; and they possess another secret instinct, a remnant of the greatness of our first nature, which tells them that happiness is really to be found in repose and not in tumult. From these two opposite instincts a confused notion is formed in their minds, hidden away from the surface, leading them to seek rest through excitement, and to fancy perpetually that the satisfaction they cannot find will come, if, by surmounting this or that present obstacle, they can open the door which leads to repose.

And thus all life flows past. Men seek rest by overcoming obstacles, and when these are overcome the rest becomes intolerable. For then they brood either over their actual or their threatened woes, and even if they were to be

absolutely sheltered from all these, *enanti*, or its personal authority, would not fail to spring up in the heart where it has some indigenous seeds, and would fill the mind with its poison.

The counsel bestowed on Pyrrhus, to take the rest he was fain to seek amid so many toils, was full of difficulty.

So we see man to be so unhappy that he would grow weary without any cause, as a mere matter of temperament, and so frivolous that, being full of a thousand real causes for anxiety, the veriest trifle—a mere billiard ball to push—is enough to distract him!

You may ask, what object has he? To boast among his friends that he played better than some one else. So the brow of another sweats in order that from his study he may prove to his fellow *savants* that he has solved a mathematical question hitherto unfathomed, while many more expose themselves to untold dangers in order to boast afterwards of some siege, which to me seems mere folly! So again others perish

² Montaigne says, "Et de son autorité privée, à ceste heure le chagrin prédomine en moy; à ceste heure l'allégresse."—*Essais*, l. ii. c. 12.

on behalf of such things, not that they may be the wiser or better therefrom, but merely to display their wisdom, and they are the most foolish of all, since they are deliberate in their folly, while we may suppose that the others would be wiser did they know better.

Here is a man who beguiles his life by gambling daily for some trifling sum. Give him every morning the sum he may win that day, on condition he does not play, and you will make him miserable. Some one will say, perhaps, that his object is the amusement, not the gain. Well, then, make him play for nothing, and he will not get excited, and will be bored. Then it is not mere amusement that he seeks ; a languid unexciting diversion bores him. He must get excited and eager, fancying that it makes him happy to win that which he would refuse at the price of not playing, in order that he may be a subject of enthusiasm, and rouse his desire, his eagerness, his anxiety about the object he has created for himself, just as children are frightened at the mask they have themselves daubed. Whence comes it that this man, who

but a few months since lost his only son, and who only this morning was so oppressed with lawsuits and worries, thinks no more about it all? Do not be surprised,—he is absorbed in watching which way that boar will run which the dogs have been hunting for the last six hours. That is quite enough: however full of woe the man may be, if once he gets absorbed for some hours in any diversion he will be happy for the time.

And again, however happy a man may be, unless he be diverted and occupied by some passion or amusement which hinder *ennui*, he will soon be gloomy and wretched. Without diversion he knows no joy, with it no sadness. And the happiness of many in high position lies in their being surrounded by those who distract them.

Beware. The condition of one in any high post—chancellor, first president, what not—is to be surrounded perpetually by a crowd of people, who pour in from all sides, and never leave the great man an hour to think of his inner life. And when a reverse comes, and he is banished

to his own home, though he wants neither for means nor dependants, he will be miserable and feel forsaken, because there is nobody to prevent him from reflecting upon himself.

CXCVII.

Since men find that they are unable to hinder death, their miserable ignorance has imagined to find happiness by not thinking of it.²

Notwithstanding all his troubles, he wants to be happy, entirely happy, and cannot will otherwise; but how is he to set about it? The only real way is to make himself immortal, but as he cannot do that he tries not to think of death.

CXCVIII.

It is easier to meet death without thought than the thought of death without danger.

CXCIX.

The only thing which consoles us in our

² Had a certain English statesman read this when he exclaimed that "life would be tolerable without its pleasures!"

troubles is diversion; and yet that is the greatest of all our troubles, for it is that which chiefly hinders reflection, and makes us lose ourselves gradually. Without it we shall suffer *ennui*, and that would move us to seek a more substantial remedy. But diversion amuses us and beguiles us insensibly on to death.

CC.

Man's condition is one of inconsistency, *ennui*, anxiety, and from out all these frailties the craving for distraction has arisen. He who cannot discover the world's vanity must be full of vanity himself; and indeed who fails to perceive it, save young people who are as it were stunned by racket, amusement, and the hope of the future? But take away their amusements, and you will see them wither up with *ennui*; then they feel their emptiness without understanding it, for it is a great misery to be in a condition of unendurable sadness directly one is thrown upon oneself, and to know no means of distraction.

CCI.

In omnibus requiem quæsiui. If our condition were one of real happiness we should not distract our thoughts from it in order to be happy.

CCII.

Nothing is so intolerable to man as to be at perfect rest, without passion, business, amusement, or occupation. He then realises himself to be all nothingness, loneliness, insufficiency, dependence, helplessness, and blank, and speedily there come forth from his heart the demons of *ennui*, darkness, depression, vexation, anger, and despair.

CCIII.

When a soldier or a labourer complains of the trouble of his work, let them only try idleness.

CCIV.

Being naturally uneasy under all circumstances,

our wishes represent to us a state of happiness, because they combine in imagination the condition in which we are with the pleasures of another condition in which we are not. Could we attain those pleasures we should not be happy, because we should at the same time experience other longings arising out of this altered condition.

CCV.

We never confine our attention enough to the present moment: we anticipate the future, and strive to hasten what we think its tardy course; Or we recall the past as though it swept too hastily by. In our imprudence we wander at large amid what is not ours, and heed not the only season over which we have any real claim: in our levity we dwell upon what is gone for ever, while we suffer the actual reality to slip unperceived from us. For the most part it is the present which tries us. We hide our eyes from it because it gives us pain, or, if it affords us pleasure, we are unwilling to see it pass by. We try to prolong it by help of the past, and

affect to influence things which are beyond our power, with a view to a time to which we may never attain.

If any one will examine his thoughts he will find that they are always full of the past or the future. We think but little of the present, and that little is chiefly to borrow light to throw upon the future. The present never is our end ; past and present are means, the future alone is our end. And so we never live, but always hope to live, and always trying to be happy at some future time, it inevitably comes to pass that we never attain the goal.

CCVI.

Imagination is man's great deceiver, a constant source of error and falsehood, all the more treacherous that it is not always deceitful ; inasmuch as it would become an infallible rule of truth if it were an infallible proof of falsehood. But while for the most part untrue, it gives no sure indication, and deals indiscriminately with what is true and false.

• Nor am I only speaking of fools, but of the wisest men, and it is among them that imagination has greatest power to influence. Reason may exclaim as she pleases; she cannot fix things at their true level.

This powerful enemy of reason, who delights to show her power by restraining and dominating her on all sides, has created a second nature in man. Imagination makes her own sad and joyful, sick and healthy, rich and poor subjects; she causes men to believe, doubt, or contradict reason; she suspends or quickens the senses; she makes fools and wise men, and nothing is more provoking than to see how far more heartily and entirely she satisfies her subjects than reason does. They whose gifts come from imagination are self-satisfied in a way which no prudent man can ever reasonably be. They lord it over men, they argue boldly and confidently, while the other is timid and full of self-mistrust; but their self-confidence often gives them the advantage in the mind of those who are lookers-on, inasmuch as both sage and judge are slaves of imagination. She cannot make

wise men of fools, but at all events she makes them happy, while reason too often only knows how to make her votaries miserable; the one bringing praise, the other shame.

What dispenses fame, what showers respect and esteem upon people, works, laws, or dignities, save this same faculty of imagination? All the riches of the earth are insufficient without her help.

Would you not suppose that this magistrate, whose venerable age inspires the world with respect, was governed by a fine and lofty reason, and that he would see all things as they really are, unhindered by the trivial matters which are only of a nature to trouble the imagination of the weak? Watch him going to hear a sermon with zealous devotion, his solid reason tempered by his active charity, ready to listen with exemplary attention. But if nature has bestowed on the preacher a grotesque countenance, if he has some odd peculiarity or accidental oddity, let him enunciate the gravest truths he will, and I am positive that our revered senator will lose his gravity. Place the profoundest philosopher that

ever lived on a plank even wider than need be, and if there be a precipice below, while reason proves his safety, imagination will prevail. Many a man will turn pale and tremble at the mere thought.

We all know that the sight of a reptile, the crunch of a cinder, or the like, will at times utterly overpower a man's reason. A tone of voice will suffice to impose on the best judges, and give an altogether fictitious value to a sermon or a poem. Love or hatred give a new aspect to justice, and the well-paid pleader finds his cause a marvellous good one, while his bold assurance drapes it in undeserved dignity before the judge, who is led away by appearances. Poor unfortunate Reason, thus at the mercy of every wind that blows !

Were I to enumerate all that imagination works, I should recapitulate almost every human act, for men rarely subdue her, and that by fits and starts. Reason has been forced to yield, and even the wisest among us accepts as his principles what human imagination has audaciously forced in upon us.

Imagination influences everything : she rules the beauty, justice, and happiness of the world. I would fain see a certain Italian book, of which I only know the title—" *Della opinione, regina del mondo.*"¹

CCVII.

Self-interest is a wonderful agent in blind-folding us pleasantly. The most upright man living is not allowed to be judge in his own cause ; and I have known men who, in order to avoid yielding to self-interest, have been most unjust from an opposite point of view ; the surest way to lose a good cause was to let it be supported by one of their own relations. Justice and truth are two such subtle points that our human instruments are too blunt to touch them with precision ; we are apt to miss the point, and groping about, to reach the false rather than the true.

CCVIII.

How difficult it is to place anything before

¹ "Opinion, the Queen of the World."

another man's mind without influencing his judgment by the very way in which we present it! If you say, "I think it fine, or obscure," or what not, you either bias his imagination in that direction, or you excite it to opposition on another. It is better to express no opinion, and then he will judge according to what he really feels,—that is to say, what he feels just then, and according to the mood in which circumstances which you have not influenced place him. Unless, indeed, the very fact of your silence has its weight, according to the construction he may be disposed to put upon it, or the interpretation he may choose to make of your gestures, tone of voice, or expression of countenance, if he be a physiognomist! So difficult is it not to divert any opinion from its natural course, or rather so rare is it to find anywhere what is stable and firm!

CCIX.

The nature of self-love and of the human
Me is to love and consider self only. But

how? Man cannot hinder this object of his affections from being full of weakness and frailty; he would fain be great, and finds himself small; he would fain be happy, and he is miserable; he would fain be perfect, and finds himself full of imperfections; he would fain attract the love and esteem of all men, yet he cannot fail to see that his faults deserve only contempt and dislike. This disappointment arouses the most unjust and wrongful passion possible in him; he conceives a mortal hatred for the truth which reproves and convinces him of error. He would annihilate it if he could, and being unable to destroy the truth itself, he strives to destroy it as far as lies in his power in himself and in others,—that is to say, he strives diligently to conceal his faults from himself and from other men, and cannot abide either to have them set before him or to let others see them.

Doubtless it is an evil to be full of faults, but it is a much greater evil to be thus full of faults and to refuse the recognition thereof, thereby adding the evil of a voluntary self-deception. We are not willing to be deceived by others;

we do not think it fair that they should seek more than they deserve at our hands ; then surely it is not fair that we should deceive them, or expect them to think better of us than we deserve.

Accordingly, when they only discover the imperfections and vices which really beset us, they obviously do us no wrong ; inasmuch as they are not the cause of these faults, and they are serving us if they help us at least to get rid of one evil, namely, ignorance of our failings. We ought not to be angry because others recognise these, and despise us ; it is only just that we should be known as what we are, and despised if we are despicable.

Such at least would be the feeling of a thoroughly just, upright heart ; and if so, what have we to say of our own, when it shows the very opposite tendency ? Is it not a fact that we dislike the truth and those who tell it to us ; that we prefer they should be deceived in our favour, and that we wish them to think us other than what we really are ?

Take an example. Our religion does not

enjoin upon us that we discover our sins to all the world. She suffers them to remain generally hidden, making the exception of one man, to whom she bids us open our heart and show ourselves without disguise. There is but this one whom she would have us undeceive, and him she binds to such inviolable secrecy that he receives his knowledge as though he had it not. Can anything more tender or pitiful be imagined? Yet so great is man's corruption that he esteems even such an injunction hard, and many have revolted from the Church in consequence. How unjust and unreasonable it is to think it hard to do that with respect to one man which strict justice would after a fashion require us to do to all; for is it just that we deceive all mankind?

There are various degrees of this aversion to truth, but we may fairly say that it exists more or less in us all, inasmuch as it is inseparable from self-love. This false sensitiveness constrains those who are in authority to make use of such endless precautions and refinements when called upon to rebuke others for fear of wounding them. They are forced to lighten our

faults, to make believe to excuse them, to inter-
perse praise and commendation with needful
blame ; and with all that, the medicine is never-
theless bitter to our self-love. We take as little
as we can, and always with disgust, not un-
frequently with a secret spite towards those who
administer it.

Hence it follows, that if it is to other men's
interest to be liked by us, they avoid rendering
us a service which they know to be disagreeable ;
they treat us as we like to be treated. We hate
the truth, they keep it back ; we like to be
flattered, they flatter us ; we like to be deceived,
they deceive us. And so it comes to pass that
every rise of worldly prosperity carries us farther
and farther from the truth, because men are
more afraid of offending those whose favour is
most profitable and their dislike a peril. A
prince may be the talk of all Europe, and he
alone unconscious of it. No wonder ; telling
the truth is profitable to him to whom it is told,
but unprofitable to those who tell it, because
thereby they incur his dislike. And they who
surround princes care more for their own in-

terests than the interests of him they serve, and consequently they forbear conferring a benefit on him to their own disadvantage.

Undoubtedly this misfortune is greater and more common among those of high estate, but the humblest are not exempt from it, because there is always some motive to make oneself attractive to other men. And so human life is but a perpetual delusion, we are all deceiving and flattering one another. Nobody speaks of us in our presence as he would speak in our absence. All union among men is built upon this mutual deceit, and few friendships would last if every man knew what his friend says of him behind his back, although he may speak sincerely and without prejudice. In short, man is all disguise, falsehood, and hypocrisy, both towards himself and others. He will not suffer the truth to be told to him, he will not tell it to them; and all these tendencies, so opposed to justice and reason, are deeply rooted in his heart.

CCX.

Before embarking in deep research into nature, let man seriously and deliberately reflect upon it, as also upon himself, and then judge their relative proportions by the comparison he will institute between the two objects.

Let man contemplate all nature in the vastness and fulness of her majesty; let him turn aside from the lower objects which surround him; let him gaze upon that wondrous light fixed as an everlasting lamp to lighten the universe, beholding the earth as a mere speck as compared with the mighty orbit described, and marvelling as he perceives that this very orbit is but a slender thread as compared with that which the planets, as they travel through the firmament, describe. And where sight fails let imagination take up the tale; verily it will weary of conception ere nature wearies of production. The whole visible world is but as a well-nigh imperceptible speck in the spacious

bosom of nature. No idea can attain it. We may strive to swell our conceptions beyond all imaginable space; we shall but produce atoms which are devoid of every shade of reality. Creation is an infinite sphere, of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. The most striking feature as regards man of God's Omnipotence is that our imagination becomes utterly lost before the thought. Let man recall himself, and consider what he is and at what a price; let him behold himself as a mere waif in this vast region of nature, and from the tiny cell wherein his lot is cast—I mean this universe—let him learn^c duly to weigh earth, kingdoms, cities, and himself at their true value.

What is a man in Infinity?

But to turn to another no less marvellous prodigy, let him investigate what we know amid the most delicate details of nature. Look at a mite, whose tiny frame presents a series of yet tinier parts; limbs jointed, veins in those limbs, blood in those veins, globules in that blood, and so forth; until through endless sub-

divisions he exhausts his power of imagination, and the last division at which he can arrive we will take as our point, for he may fancy that this is the minutest extreme of nature. But even therein let him discover a new abyss. I am prepared to point out to him not merely the visible universe, but the immensity which we can conceive of nature, even in the circle of this concentrated atom, containing worlds of its own, each with its firmament, its planets, its creatures, to all infinity; so that he himself, who but a short time back was imperceptible in creation, becomes a Colossus, a world, in comparison with this unfathomable nothingness.

He who dwells on such thoughts will tremble at the realisation of the marvels contained in himself, existing as he does between these two abysses of infinity and nothingness; and verily I believe his curiosity will be transformed into admiration, and he will be more disposed to contemplate in silence than to investigate presumptuously.

For, after all, what is man amid nature? A

nought as regards the infinite, all in all as regards nothingness, an intermediate between nothing and all. Infinitely removed from comprehension of the extremes, the end of all things and their beginning are invincibly hidden from him in impenetrable mystery; he is equally incapable of realising the nothingness whence he came forth or the infinity which swallows him up.

What is left him save some slender perceptions midway, and an eternal despair as to any knowledge of beginning or end! All things came forth from nothing and are travelling onwards to infinity. What is the result of such mighty mysteries? He Who created them knows, to none else is it possible.

For want of due contemplation of these infinities, men have rushed boldly upon the investigation of nature as though they were in some relative proportion to her. Strange that they should seek to comprehend first principles, and so to attain to universal knowledge, with a presumption as unlimited as their aim; for it is undeniable that such a design implies either

as infinite presumption or as infinite capacity as nature's own.

Those who are learned perceive that Nature, having stamped her image and that of her Author on all things, they almost all possess more or less of her double infinitude. Thus we see that all the sciences are infinite in the extent of their research. Who questions that geometry, for instance, contains an infinite infinity of propositions to solve? Moreover, they are infinite in the multitude and delicacy of their original principles; for who can fail to perceive that what we call the original cannot stand alone, but that they lean upon others, which in their turn are supported, and so on *ad infinitum*.

But we deal with the furthest back which are visible to our reason, as we are wont to do in material things, wherein we call some point beyond which our sensual vision cannot go indivisible, although really it be capable of infinite further division. Of these two scientific infinitudes that of greatness is far the most appreciable, and consequently few men have

pretended to universal knowledge. It was Democritus who said "I will speak of all things."

CCXI.

We can see at once that arithmetic alone affords numberless properties, and so does every other science.

But infinity in minuteness is much less perceptible, and philosophers who have often affected to grasp it have all run aground. Hence we so often come across such titles as "First Principles," "Principles of Philosophy," and the like, which are really as presumptuous, though with less pretension at first sight, as that astounding assumption *de omni scibili*.

We naturally imagine ourselves more able to reach the centre of things than to unfold their circumference. We perceive that the visible extent of the world altogether exceeds us, but as we exceed little things, we fancy ourselves capable of grasping them; but nevertheless it requires no less capacity to fathom Nothingness

than All. Both alike demand an infinite capacity, and it seems to me that he who could read the first principles of things could pierce through infinitude. One hangs upon the other, one leads to the other. The extremities join and unite with the force of recoil, meet again in God; and in God only.

Let us thoroughly understand our level. We are somewhat, but we are not all. What we possess conceals from us those rudiments of things which come out of nothingness; and because we possess so little infinity is hidden from us.

Our intelligence holds the same place amid things immaterial as our body amid the order of things natural. Limited everywhere, all our powers are subject to this condition, intermediate between two extremes.

Our senses can grasp no extreme. Too much noise deafens us; too much light dazzles us; too great distance or too great proximity hinder our sight; too many or too few words obscure sense; an excess of truth overwhelms us. I know some minds which cannot understand that take four

from nought and nought remains! First principles are too convincing. Too much pleasure becomes pain; too much harmony in music frets the ear; too many benefits irritate; we would fain be able to return somewhat. *Beneficia eo usque læta sunt dum videntur exsolvi posse; ubi multum antevenere, pro gratia odium redditur.*¹

Extreme heat or extreme cold numb the body; all excessive sensations are antagonistic to us; we cease to *feel*, we endure. The mind is fettered in extreme youth and extreme old age by too little and by too much learning.² In short, all extremes are as though they were not to us, and we are as nought; either they escape us or we escape them.

This is our true condition; this makes us incapable of positive knowledge and of absolute ignorance. We are tossed upon a vast intermediate ocean, floating hither and thither. When we fancy we have attained some fixed

¹ Quoted by Montaigne from Tacitus. *Ann.* l. iv. 18.

² Montaigne says, "La fin et le commencement de science se tiennent en pareille bêtise."

point it totters and departs, and if we attempt to follow it slips from us and departs for ever. Nothing stops for us. Such is our natural condition, yet one most contrary to our inclination; we passionately desire to find a firm standing and basis whereon to erect our tower which may reach infinity; but our foundation splits, and the abyss yawns.

Let us then not pretend to seek certainty and firmness. Our reason is perpetually deceived by false appearances, nothing can make a fixed finite point between the two encircling infinities. And this once accepted, I think we shall be at rest, each in the state where nature has placed him. That intermediate position being always far from the extreme points, what does it matter whether man has a trifle more or less knowledge? Will he not always be infinitely far from the end, and is not our life alike nought in view of eternity whether we live ten years more or less?

Looking at these infinities, all that is finite is equal, and I do not see why we should fix our imagination on one thing rather than another. If man would study himself to begin with,

he would see how incapable he is of going further.

How can a part embrace the whole? Or would he aspire to know such parts as bear relatively on himself? But the various parts of the world are all so linked together, that I believe it to be impossible to know one apart from all.

For instance, man is involved in all that he perceives. He requires space to hold him, time to endure, motion to live, elements of composition, heat and food, air to breathe. He sees the light, he feels substances; all things bear upon his existence. So, really to understand man, it would be necessary to know wherefore he requires air to exist, and to understand what the air is, to know how it influences man's life. Flame cannot exist without air, so to understand one we must understand the other.

Thus as all things are caused and being, aided and aiding, mediate and immediate, all interwoven by a natural unconscious link, which binds the most distant and most different, it seems to me as impossible to know a part without knowing the whole as it is to know

the whole without individual knowledge of the parts.

Moreover, what completes our powerlessness to know things is, that these are simple, whereas we are complex, possessing two widely opposed natures—the soul and body. It is impossible that that which reasons in us be other than the spiritual nature; and were it to be said that it was the bodily nature, that alone would exclude us from the knowledge of things, as it were absurd to pretend that matter can have any knowledge of itself. So, if we are simply material, we can know nothing; if composed of mind and matter, we cannot know simple things apart as bodily or spiritual.

Hence most philosophers confound ideas, and speak of bodily things as though they were spiritual, and spiritual as though they were bodily. Thus they boldly talk of bodies tending downwards or aspiring to their centre; flying from destruction, abhorring a vacuum, having inclinations, sympathies, antipathies, &c., which all are properties peculiar to the spirit only: whereas, in speaking of spirits, they treat them

as being subject to place, talking of their movement here and there—properties peculiar to bodies.

Instead of acquiring simple ideas of these things, we colour them all with our own qualities, and stamp our own composite being on all the simple things around.

Who would not suppose, who sees how we combine the action of body and soul in all we do, that this intermixture would be easily understood by men? Yet it is the very thing we least understand. Man himself is the most marvellous object in nature; for he cannot imagine what the body is, still less what the spirit, and, least of all, how body and spirit can be united. This is the climax of his difficulties, and yet it is his own actual being! *Modus quo corporibus adhæret spiritus comprehendere ab hominibus non potest; et hæc tamen homo est.*

CCXII.

They who read too fast or too slowly take in nothing.

¹ St. Augustine.

Too much or too little wine balks the discovery of truth.

CCXIII.

Nature has balanced us so nicely that we cannot alter one scale without altering the other. It inclines me to believe that there are certain springs in the head, so arranged that in touching one we necessarily touch its opposite force.

CCXIV.

Too much or too little thought, and we grow puzzled and obstinate.

CCXV.

If one looks at one's work directly it is finished one is under the influence of prejudice; while a long time after one forgets its intention. So pictures ought not to be seen too near or too far off; there is only one single point of view which is right, all others are too near or too far, too high or too low. Perspective fixes this in drawing, but who can fix it in truth and morals?

CCXVI.

There goes on a perpetual interior war in man between reason and the passions.

- If he had reason only and no passions

If he had passions only and no reason

But having both, war is inevitable, because he cannot be at peace with one save when combating the other. Hence he is always torn asunder, and lives in an atmosphere of self-contest.

CCXVII.

Solomon and Job, of all living, knew best and spoke most truly of man's misery; one the happiest, the other the most unhappy of mankind, and that because the one knew the worthlessness of pleasure by experience, the other the reality of suffering by the same.

CCXVIII.

We are so filled with a lofty idea of the human

soul that we cannot endure to be despised, or to lose the esteem of one; and so all man's happiness lies in being esteemed.

Man never lowers himself so deeply as in pursuit of glory, yet at the same time it is the strongest indication of his worth; for let him possess what worldly treasures he may, let him have all imaginable health and other advantages, he will not be content unless he be held in good esteem by his fellow-men. He sets so high a value on human reason that, however well he may stand on earth, he is not satisfied unless he also stand well in men's opinion. It is the most desirable position in the world to him; nothing can divert him from the wish,—it is the most persistent desire of his heart. And even they who despise men the most, who liken them to brutes, yet desire to be admired and believed of men, thus contradicting themselves. Their nature is stronger than they, and it convinces them of the greatness of man more forcibly than their reason convinces them of its inferiority.

CCXIX.

This double nature in man is so evident, that some have inferred thence that we have two souls; fancying that a single being must be incapable of so many sudden vicissitudes, of such boundless presumption, and such intense depression.

CCXX.

In spite of all the miseries which press upon us, and grapple with us, there is an instinct within man which we cannot repress, and which lifts us up.

CCXXI.

The greatness of man is so obvious that it rises above all his weakness. For what is nature in the animal creation we call weakness in man, whereby we recognise that our present nature being similar to that of animals, it has fallen from what was once a higher nature. Thus who would count himself miserable in that he is

not a king, save a dethroned monarch? Did men pity Paulus Emilius because he was no longer consul? On the contrary, every one counted him fortunate in that he had once been a consul, because it was not his natural condition to be always such. But men so greatly pitied Perseus for being no longer king, because royalty was his natural condition, that they marvelled how he survived it. Who counts himself unfortunate in that he has but one mouth? but who but would count himself most unfortunate if he has but one eye? Probably no one ever lamented that he had not three eyes; but they are inconsolable who have none.

CCXXII.

Misery cannot exist without feeling. A ruined house is not miserable; only man has the capacity of misery. *Ego vir videns.*

Man's greatness is great in that he knows himself to be miserable. A tree does not know that it is miserable.

So it is miserable to realise one's misery, but it is great to know that one is miserable.

All such woes prove man's greatness : they are the woes of a mighty man, the woes of a dethroned monarch.

CCXXIII.

The greatness of man is thought.

I can easily imagine a man without hands, feet, or head ; for it is only experience which teaches us that the head is more needful than the feet ; but I cannot imagine a man without the power of thought, he would be a mere stone or a brute.

It is thought, then, wherein lies the being of man, and without which we cannot imagine him. What is it in us that is conscious of pleasure ? Is it the hand or the arm, the flesh or the blood ? No ; it must be something immaterial.

CCXXIV.

My dignity is not to be found in space, but in the ruling of my thoughts. I should gain nothing by the possession of lands. Through

space the universe compasses me, and swallows me up as a mere atom; but by thought I compass the universe.

CCXXV.

Man is but the frailest reed of nature, but he is a thinking reed. No need to bestir the whole universe to destroy man; a vapour, a drop of water, will suffice to kill him. But when crushed by the universe, man would yet be nobler than his destroyer, because he is conscious of his death, and the universe knows not even its advantage over him.

Thus all our dignity consists in our thought: we must take our stand thereon, not on space or duration, wherein we have no power. Let it be our effort to think aright; this is the point of the moral.

CCXXVI.

Man is evidently made for thought, all his dignity and worth lie therein, and his one main duty is to think aright; and the right course of

thought is to begin with self, our Author and our end. But what does the world think upon? Anything but that! Of dancing, playing, singing, verse-making, running the ring; of building up a house, or of becoming a king, without stopping to think what it is to be a king, or what to be a man.

CCXXVII.

All man's dignity is in the power of thought.¹

Then thought is naturally an admirable, incomparable thing, and it must have strange aberrations to become despicable. But it has such, and becomes utterly ridiculous. How great it is by nature, how mean by reason of its faults!

CCXXVIII.

It is dangerous to show man too plainly how far he is on the level of brutes without showing him his greatness; and, again, it is dangerous

¹ In his MS. Pascal has made an annotation here: "After all, what is this thought? How foolish!"

to show him his greatness too plainly without his meanness. Still more dangerous is it to let him be ignorant of both; the real benefit is to set both before him.

It will not do for man to reckon himself on a par with the brute creation, neither "equal to the angels;" nor must he be ignorant of his proximity to either. Rather he should realise both.

CCXXIX.

In proportion as we gain light we discover both more greatness and more meanness in man. Ordinary men, those who rise somewhat higher—philosophers: these last astonish ordinary men. Then Christians, they astonish the philosophers.

Who need marvel to see that religion only discovers thoroughly that which men habitually discover according as they have more or less light?

CCXXX.

Pride outweighs and overpowers all other weaknesses. It is a strange monster, a very

visible error. It has fallen from its place, and seeks it anxiously. This is what all men do. Let us see who will find it?

Not to particularise, we may include all attempts under the head of diversion.

This is the best thing men have been able to invent as a comfort for their woes. But what a wretched comfort, since it aims not at curing the evil, but merely to hide it for a while, without even the idea of a real cure. Thus, by a curious reversal of man's nature, *ennui*, man's most pressing woe, is after a fashion his greatest boon; because more than all else it tends to make him seek a real cure; and amusement or diversion, which he reckons his greatest good, is really his worst evil, because it above all things keeps him from seeking his true relief. Both alike are a wondrous proof of the frailty and corruption of man, and at the same time of his greatness; and that because man is only weary of all things, and led to seek a crowd of distractions, because he has a lingering notion of the happiness he has lost; the which, as he cannot find it in himself, he vainly seeks in outer

things, without ever being able to satisfy himself, inasmuch as happiness is not to be found in self, nor in anything created, but in God only.

CCXXXI.

We long for truth, and find only uncertainty in ourselves. We seek happiness, and find only sorrow and death. We cannot help longing for truth and happiness, and the longing is given both as a chastisement and to make us feel whence we are fallen.

CCXXXII.

Children are terrified at the mask they themselves have daubed, and we say they are but children. But will their weakness become strength when they are older? Men only change the object of their fancy!

CCXXXIII.

If man be not made for God, how comes it, then, he finds no happiness save in God?

If man be made for God, how comes it that he so often sets himself against God?

CCXXXIV.

Philosophers have not inculcated the mind that is adapted to man's two capacities—greatness and abasement. They inculcated emotions of simple greatness, which is not man's true condition; and they inculcated emotions of simple abasement, and neither is that man's true condition.

What we need is an abasement not natural, but of repentance, not as an abiding state, but as the road to greatness. And so too we need greatness, not of merit but of grace, as the outcome of abasement.

CCXXXV.

The Stoic says, Look within, it is there you will find rest; but it is not true. Another says, Look without, you will find happiness in diversion; but that is not true.

Happiness is neither without nor within us: it is in God alone, and through Him within and without us.

CCXXXVI.

The common run of men look for happiness in fortune and visible possessions, or in amusement. The philosophers have demonstrated the vanity thereof, and have sought it as they best could. *Ut sis contentus tēmetipsq. et ex te nascentibus bonis.* But they contradict themselves, for they sometimes recommend suicide. What a happy life which has to be got rid of as if a pestilence!

CCXXXVII.

It is well to be worn and weary with a fruitless search after what is really good, so that we may open our arms to our Deliverer.

Man shall find no rest in himself or in others, so that he may turn to ME!

CCXXXVIII.

Jesus Christ is the Object of all things, and the Centre to which all things tend. Whoso knows Him knows the meaning of all things.

CCXXXIX.

It is remarkable that no canonical writer has ever used natural arguments to prove the existence of God. David, Solomon, &c., never said, "There is no such thing as a void, consequently there must be a God." They were cleverer than the most clever men who have lived since, and who have used this argument.

CCXI.

The God of Christians is not merely a God Who is the Author of geometrical truths and the course of elements,—that is, the God of heathen and Epicureans. Neither is He merely a God Who exercises His providential care over the lives and property of men, bestowing length of days and prosperity on those who worship Him,—that is, the God of the Jews. But the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—the Christian's God—is a God of love and consolation. He is a God Who fills the hearts and minds He possesses; Who makes them feel to the core

their own weakness and His infinite mercy; Who unites Himself to the very depths of their soul, filling it with humility, joy, confidence, and love, and Who makes them incapable of resting in any other end than Himself.

CCXLI.

All those who seek God apart from our Lord Jesus Christ, and stop short in nature, either find no light which satisfies them, or work out for themselves an imperfect system of knowing and serving God without any mediator, and hence they fall into atheism or deism—two errors about equally abhorrent to the Christian religion.

- Without Jesus Christ the world could not subsist; it must either perish or be a very hell.

CCXLII.

All men seek after happiness, and that without any exception; however various the means they use, all have the like object. The man who goes to war and the man who stays at

home are both actuated by the same desire, though influenced by different impressions. Our will never takes any, even the smallest step, save with this object. It is the motive of every action of every man, even of the man who hangs himself.

Yet during all these ages no one without religion has ever reached the point at which all men continually aim. All murmur and lament; prince and peasant, ruler and ruled, young and old, strong and weakly, learned and ignorant, healthy and sick; all nations and all times, all ages and all ranks.

So prolonged, so continual, and so unchanging a trial should convince us of our powerlessness to attain the desired good by our own exertions, but we do not learn from example. No example is ever so precisely similar to our own actual position but that there is some trifling difference, and thence we infer that our expectation will not be disappointed this time as before. And so, never satisfied with the present, hope deludes us on from one misfortune to another, until we find a final calamity in death.

What does this eagerness, this powerlessness, cry aloud, save that once man possessed a real happiness, of which now nought is left him save the impression and the empty blank—a blank which he vainly strives to fill with whatever he can, expecting to find in things at a distance what he fails to find in things present, to be alike disappointed, inasmuch as that infinite craving can be filled but by one Infinite, Unchanging Object, even God Himself? He only is man's real Good, and since man forsook Him, it is wondrous to behold how nothing in nature has been able to take His place. Moreover, having lost the one true Good, all things bear a deceitful semblance thereof to him, even to his own destruction, contrary as that is to God, to reason, and nature alike.

Some men seek rest in greatness and power ; others in investigation and science ; others in voluptuous delights ; others, who are nearer the mark, have believed that that universal good which all men desire is not to be found in any individual possession proper to individual men, which causes more pain to its possessor if shared

with others, by the loss of that which he has not, than pleasure in that which he has. Such men have understood that a real good must be what all could possess simultaneously without envy or loss, and which can be taken from none without his consent. (Fragment.)

CCXLIII.

Man's true nature, his true good, true virtue, and true religion are all matters the knowledge of which is inseparable.

CCXLIV.

True religion teaches us our duty, our helplessness, pride, and concupiscence, and the remedies thereof—humility and mortification.

CCXLV.

After grasping the whole nature of man, evidently no religion can be true without having known our nature, its greatness and littleness,

the causes of one and the other. What religion save the Christian has done this?

None other has recognised that man is the best of created things. Some, realising his excellence, have treated the low esteem which men naturally have of themselves as ingratitude and cowardice; others, realising the true meanness of man, have mocked at the feeling of greatness which is also natural to man. "Lift up your eyes to God," the one says; "look at Him in Whose Likeness you are made, Who made you to worship Himself; you can raise yourself to that Likeness, you can attain to His Wisdom if you seek it:" while the other says, "Cast your eyes down to the dust, wretched worm as thou art, and behold the beasts which are thy fellows." What, then, will come of man? Is he to be equal to God or to the brutes? What is to become of us? Who can but see in all this that man has strayed, that he has fallen from his place, that he seeks it anxiously and cannot find it? And who can enlighten him? The great men of the earth have failed to do so.

CCXLVI.

True religion must teach us our greatness and our misery ; must lead us both to respect and despise ourselves, both to hate and to love.

No other religion has set self-abhorrence before man. Consequently no other religion can satisfy those who abhor self, and who seek a being really worthy of love. All such as those, had they never before heard tell of the religion of a God Who "humbled Himself," would at once turn to seek it.

CCXLVII.

He who does not abhor his own self-love, and his instinctive tendency to make a god of self, is very blind. Who can fail to see that nothing can be more contrary to justice and truth.

If there is a God, we must love Him only, not mere fleeting creatures. The reasoning of the ungodly, of which we read in the Book of Wisdom (c. ii.), is only founded on there being

no God. That premiss established, "Come," say they, "let us enjoy the good things that are present," as the only alternative. But if there were a God to love, they would have come to the opposite conclusion. And the conclusion of wise men is, "There is a God, therefore we will not enjoy (or rest in) mere earthly creatures."

Thus whatever incites us to cleave to the creature is bad, inasmuch as it hinders us from serving God if we know Him, or from seeking Him if we know Him not. Now we are full of concupiscence, and therefore full of evil, therefore we must needs abhor self, and whatever incites us to cleave to aught else save God only.

CCXLVIII.

We see that there is but one only Beginning of all things, one only End of all : all things are of Him and for Him. Therefore true religion must teach us to worship Him only, and to love Him only. But inasmuch as we find ourselves powerless to worship that which we know not,

or to love aught save self, needs must be that the religion which teaches us these duties should teach us also our helplessness, and its remedy. So it teaches us that by one man all was lost, and the union between God and man severed, and that by One Man that union was restored.

CCXLIX.

Verily Christianity is marvellous; it teaches man to acknowledge himself to be vile, abominable, and yet it bids him seek to be like unto God. Without the make-weight of such an elevation would make him fearfully vain, or the abasement fearfully abject.

It is not an abasement which renders us incapable of good, neither a holiness exempt from all evil.

CCL.

Wretchedness induces despair.

Pride leads to presumption.

The Incarnation sets before man the greatness of his misery by the greatness of the remedy needed.

CCLI.

Holy Scripture has furnished sentences for the consolation of every class, and for the warning of every class.

CCLII.

Light enough is given for those who only wish to see; darkness enough for those who wish to abide in darkness.

CCLIII.

If God's Mercy is so great as to teach and lead us, even while He is hidden, what light may we not expect when He is made plain to our sight?

CCLIV.

There is nothing in the whole world which does not demonstrate either man's weakness or God's Mercy; either man's powerlessness without God or his strength with God's Help.

CCLV.

God vouchsafes rather to enlighten the will than the intellect. Full intellectual light would advance the mind but damage the will. "He setteth down the lofty."

CCLVI.

Our life in this world must be different according to these opposite suppositions :

- I. If we are sure we shall abide here for ever.
- II. If we are sure that we shall not be here long, and uncertain even if we shall be here another hour.

Now the last of these suppositions is ours.

CCLVII.

Do not marvel at seeing simple-minded persons who believe without any arguments. God gives them love for Himself, and self-abhorrence. He disposes their hearts to believe. No one can ever believe heartily and profitably unless He dispose their heart, and so soon as He thus disposes it they will believe.

This is what David knew well when he said, "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies."¹

CCLVIII.

There are three ways of believing ; through reason (or argument), custom, and inspiration. The Christian religion does not own any as her true children who believe without inspiration. Not that she rejects reason or custom ; on the contrary, but she requires us to open our mind to proof, to establish that by habit, and then in humility to prepare the soul for those inspirations through which alone the object can be gained, "lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect."²

Men do not understand the prophets until they see their words fulfilled ; and so the proofs (of the value) of retirement, silence, discretion, &c., are only evident to those who have tried and experienced them.

•Consider Joseph, so interior amid a law so wholly exterior. Outward acts of penitence

¹ Ps. cxix. 36.

² 1 Cor. i. 17.

prepare the way for interior repentance, as humiliations do for humility.

“Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? ¹ of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.” Then faith is not in our power like the works of the law, but is given to us after another manner.

Faith is a gift of God. Do not imagine we say it is a gift of reason.

God’s wont, ordering all things mercifully, is to put religion into man’s mind by reason, and into his heart by grace. But to seek to implant it either into mind or heart by force or violence is to implant not religion, but terror; *terrorem potius quam religionem*.

CCLIX.

Instead of murmuring because God ~~has~~ ~~con-~~ cealed Himself, you should rather thank Him for having revealed Himself as He has done. Thank Him, moreover, for not having manifested Himself to the proud and wise of this world, who are not worthy to know so holy a God.

¹ Rom. iii. 27.

There are two classes of persons who know Him; they whose hearts are humble, and who love lowliness, whether their intellectual capacity be great or small, and those who have mental power to perceive the truth, however much their natural tendency may be to resist it.

CCLX.

It is true that men suffer pain in the first beginnings of a pious life; but the pain is not caused by their new-born piety, but by the impiety which yet lingers within them. If our senses did not resist penitence, or our corruption set itself up against God's purity, none of this pain would exist. We suffer in proportion as that vice which is natural to us resists supernatural grace; our heart is rent by the two opposing forces. But it were unfair to impute the struggle to God, Who draws us, instead of to the world, which holds us back. It is as though a mother snatched her child from a robber's arms, when surely he must love the tender vehemence and lawful claim of her who sets

him free, and hate the forcible violence of the assailant. The most cruel treatment God could inflict on men in this life were to leave them without this war which He has ordained. "I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword."¹ "I am come to send fire on the earth."² Before Christ came the world lived in an unreal peace.

CCLXI.

"I would soon cast aside the pleasures of sin," men say, "if I believed;" and I answer, "You would soon believe if you would cast aside those pleasures." It is for you to begin. If I could, I would give you faith. I cannot, neither can I test the truth of what you say. But you can forsake those evil pleasures and test the truth of what I say.

CCLXII.

The world is divided into three classes; those who, having found God, serve Him; those who have not yet found, but are seeking Him; and

¹ Matt. x. 34.² Luke xii. 49.

those who live without having found Him, yet do not seek Him. The first are both wise and happy ; the last are foolish and miserable ; the intermediate class are not happy as yet, but they are wise.

CCLXIII.

Jesus Christ is a God before Whom we present ourselves without pride, and before Whom we humble ourselves without despair.

CCLXIV.

The knowledge of God without knowledge of our own weakness creates pride ; the knowledge of our own weakness without the knowledge of God creates despair. But the knowledge of Jesus Christ bridges the way, because therein we learn to know both our own weakness and God's Love.

CCLXV.

We intreat God's Mercy, not in order that He might leave us to go on undisturbed in our evil

ways, but in order that He might set us free from them.

CCLXVI.

If God were visibly to send us a guide straight from heaven we should cheerfully and heartily obey him. Necessities and the course of daily events are unmistakeably such to us.

CCLXVII.

Be comforted, thou wouldest not seek Me if though hadst not already found Me.

I thought on thee in My Agony ; I wept tears of blood for thee.

Thou dost rather tempt Me than test thyself by imagining what thou wouldest do were such and such a possibility to arise : I will teach thee if the trial hour comes.

Let thyself be guided by My precepts : behold how I led the Blessed Virgin and the Saints who gave themselves up to My guidance.

The Father loveth whatsoever I do.

Wilt thou ever cost Me My Blood, yet never give Me thy tears ?

Thy salvation concerns Me : fear not, only pray and trust.

I am present with thee by My word in Holy Scripture ; by My Spirit in the Church ; by My inspiration, My power committed to My priests ; by My spirit of prayer in the faithful.

Physicians cannot heal thee ; thou must die sooner or later. But I will heal thee, and restore thee an immortal body.

Bear with thy bodily chains and slavery : as yet it is from spiritual bondage only that I set thee free.

I am more thy friend than all those thou prizest most, for I have done more for thee, and have borne at thy hands what they would not have borne : neither would they die for thee, in spite of all thy faithlessness and injuries, as I have done, and as I do ceaselessly in My chosen ones.

Didst thou know all thy sins thou wouldest lose heart. Then, Lord, I must lose it, for I believe in their deepest guilt at Thy word.

Not so, since I Who tell thee of thy sins can heal thee, and the token that I will heal thee is, that I make them known to thee. As by degrees thy sins are atoned, thou wilt realise them more, and it will be said to thee, "Behold, thy sins are forgiven."

Repent of all thy hidden sins, and of the secret malice of those which are overt.

Lord, I give Thee all. And I—the Lord,—love thee more fervently than ever thou didst love thy grovelling sin. *Ut immundus pro luto.* All the praise be to Me, not to thee, O thou very worm!

If My words are a stumbling-block to thee, arousing vanity or curiosity, consult thy director.

I perceive the depth of my pride, curiosity, and concupiscence. I have no right of approach to God or to a righteous Saviour. But He has made Himself a Sin-offering for me; all Thy wrath has fallen on Him. He made Himself a greater outcast than even I am; and, so far from repulsing me, He loves to have me seek Him, and to succour me. He bids me unite my wounds to His, and He will save me from all

my sins. Nevertheless I must strive never to renew them.

Learn to do little things as though they were great in view of the Majesty of Jesus Christ, Who works them in us, and lives in us; and to do great things as though they were little in the strength of His Omnipotence.

CCLXVIII.

Be comforted; thou needest not look to be able to do all this of thyself: on the contrary, it is in looking for nought of thyself that thou mayest hope for great things.

CCLXIX.

True Christianity combines alike the use and submission of our reason.

The utmost reach of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which altogether surpass it. It is a feeble reason which cannot perceive this. And if natural things go beyond man's reasoning powers, what shall we say of those which are supernatural?

CCLXX.

Faith often teaches us that which our senses fail to perceive; but she never teaches that which is positively contrary to them. She is superior to but never in opposition to them.

CCLXXI.

It is not uncommon to find need to reproach men with excessive credulity; it is as natural a vice as incredulity, and as pernicious. It becomes superstition.

It is superstitious to fix one's hopes on mere forms, but it is pride to refuse to accept them.

Piety is widely different from superstition. To carry piety into superstition is to destroy it.

It is impiety not to believe in the ~~miraculous~~ because we cannot see it.

CCLXXII.

The law required that which it did not give. Grace gives whatever she requires.

CCLXXIII.

The whole faith is summed up in Jesus Christ and Adam ; the whole moral law in concupiscence and grace.

CCLXXIV. •

A religious man does all things in a religious spirit. If he rebukes those subject to him it is because he desires their conversion through God's Holy Spirit, and he prays God for their amendment, and expects as much from God as from his own admonitions. And so on with all his other actions.

He shares more freely in earth's troubles than in its pleasures ; he loves those that belong to him, but his charity is not restrained to such limits, but overflows upon his own enemies, and even upon the enemies of God.

CCLXXV.

There is no one so happy, so reasonable, or so attractive, as a true Christian. Without pride,

he believes himself to be in union with God ; without discouragement, he likens himself to the veriest worm of earth.

Blessed is he who thus accepts life and death, good and evil.

CCLXXVI.

In order to regulate one's lawful self-love it is well to imagine oneself a body, all the members of which can reflect, since we are members of a whole, and then to see how far each member may esteem itself.

If the feet and hands had each an individual will, they could never be at rest save by subjecting that will to the main will which rules the whole body. Without that they would be in perpetual disorder and mishap ; but seeking only the welfare of the whole body, each attains its own individual needs.

CCLXXVII.

To be a member is to live and move solely in the life of the body and for the body. A

detached member apart from the body to which it belongs has but a failing, perishing existence. Yet it fancies itself a complete thing; and not beholding the body on which it depends it supposes that it is independent, and seeks to be its own centre and life. But having no intrinsic principle of life, it only wanders and gets lost in uncertainty, conscious that it is not a body, and yet not perceiving itself to be the member of a body. If self-knowledge be attained, it learns to value itself only as of the body, and mourns its past wanderings.

It cannot love another thing save for its own sake, because each loves itself more than all else. But, loving the body, each member loves itself, because its being is in, of, and for the body. *qui adheret Deo unus Spiritus est.*

Then each member should love himself as being the member of Jesus Christ, and love Him as the Body of which each is member. All are one. All are one even as the Blessed Trinity. We must love God only, and hate self only.

If the foot had always been unaware that it belonged to the body, and that there were a

body to which it belonged; if it had only known and loved itself, and then came suddenly to the knowledge that it belonged to and was dependent on that body, how regretfully and with what shame it would realise that it had hitherto been useless to the body whence it drew in life, the body which might have destroyed the member by separating from it, as that member had separated itself from the body! With what submission it would yield to the will which rules the body, even to the extent of consenting to be cut off were it needful, inasmuch as each true member must be willing to perish for the body to whom all are devoted.

It is essential to the happiness of the members that they possess a will, and that they conform it to the will of the body.

CCLXXVIII.

We can never separate ourselves from God save by separating from Love. Our prayers and good deeds are abomination in God's Sight unless they are in Jesus Christ. And our sins are

not subjects for God's Mercy unless they be repented of through Him.

CCLXXIX.

Man's nature is stamped with perfections, to prove that it is made after the Image of God; and with imperfections, to show that it is but an image.

CCLXXX.

I should fear far more to find that I had made a mistake (in disbelieving), and that the Christian religion was true, than if my mistake were the other way, and while true I had reckoned it as false.

CCLXXXI.

The more talent a man himself has the readier he will be to find talent in other men.
Commonplace people do not perceive the gifts of others.

A LIR AND PATERSON, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

